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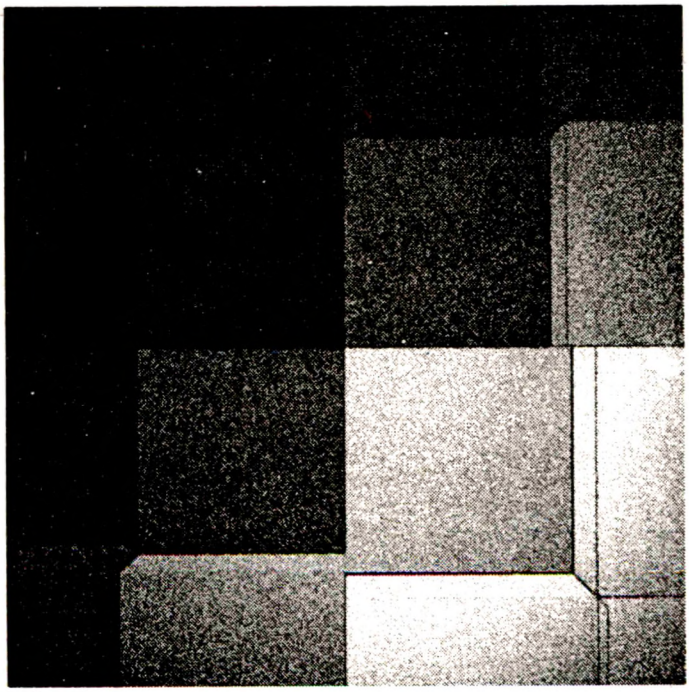

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RECONCILING EQUALITY AND PLURALISM: A NEW AGENDA FOR THE 'DEVELOPED' SOCIETIES

T. K. Oommen

LET me begin by specifying the scope of this paper. First, the adjective 'developed' calls for some clarification, in spite of the fact that it is frequently used both by experts and the lay public. Second, it is necessary to specify the sense in which the concepts equality and pluralism are used. Third, I propose to ask and answer the question as to why 'developed' societies had not until now foreseen the dilemma that would arise in reconciling equality and pluralism. Finally, I must provide the rationale for the compelling need for a new agenda.

I

The imagery of societies is often projected in terms of their quality of life, which is a summation of both material and non-material dimensions. Thus in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Report of 1991 one gets three gradings/ratings, based on a) human development, b) human freedom, and c) human distress[1] (see table 1 in which a profile of the top eighteen countries is given). It will be clear from the table that by and large those polities[2] which have scored 'high' on human development also have high scores on human freedom. But when one looks at the profile of human distress one notices substantial variations between them. A few general points may be noted here. First, with the exception of Japan, all the polities which figure in the table are

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Table 1: Ranks and Scores of Human Development, Human Freedom and Human Distress*

Polity**	Estimated Population in Millions (1990)	Human Development Ranking	Human Freedom Index Ranking***	Profile of Human Distress****
Japan	123.5	1	32	Does not figure significantly on any item.
Canada	26.5	2	34	Drug crimes highest; second highest level of pollution.
Sweden	8.4	4	38	Murders, among the highest four countries; suicides, among the highest seven countries; rapes, among the highest four countries.
Switzerland	6.6	5	34	Thirteenth in rank in terms of prisoners.
U.S.A.	249.2	7	33	Murders, the highest (11 times the rate in Japan); eighth highest rate in suicides; highest in terms of prisoners (10 times the] rate of the Netherlands); the highest rate in rapes (28 times the rate in Portugal); Drug crimes the third highest; pollution, the highest.
Netherlands	15.0	8	37	Second highest incidence of rape.
Australia	16.9	9	33	Does not figure significantly on any item.
France	56.1	10	35	Does not figure significantly on any item.
United Kingdom	57.2	11	32	Figures among the top nine countries with high incidence of suicides.

Denmark	5.1	12	38	Figures among the top four countries with the highest incidence of murders; ranks fifth in drug crimes.
Finland	5.0	13	36	Figures among the top five in the incidence of murders; figures among the top seven in regard to the incidence of suicides; ranks third with regard to the incidence of rape.
West Germany	61.8	14	35	Figures among the top seven in regard to the incidence of suicides; ranks third with regard to pollution.
Belgium	9.8	16	35	Figures among the top seven in regard to suicides.
Austria	7.6	17	36	Does not figure significantly on any item.
Italy	57.1	18	29	Does not figure significantly on any item.
Spain	39.2	20	26	Does not figure significantly on any item.
Greece	10	24	31	Does not figure significantly on any item.
Portugal	10.3	36	30	Does not figure significantly on any item.

* Worked out on the basis of data/information available in UNDP, 1991 *Human Development Report 1991*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

** Only countries with a population of five million or more are included in the table.

*** The Human Freedom Index assigns one score to each item of freedom protected and a 'zero' to each item violated, the total number of items being forty. Countries ranking between 31-40 are taken to be having a high freedom ranking, but the highest score secured by any country is thirty-eight.

**** The profile with regard to human distress is worked out based on units of 100,000 population, that is, the number of murders, suicides, rapes, etc., per that unit of population.

populated mainly by Europeans.[3] Second, of the 17 European countries listed, seven (Australia, France, Austria, Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal) do not have a very depressing human distress profile. None of these polities are development toppers; in fact five of them are at the bottom of the development ranking, and three (scoring thirty or less points) have only medium ranking with regard to freedom. Third, of the seven countries (among the seventeen European countries) with a relatively low human distress profile five are predominantly Catholic, one is Orthodox and only one is Protestant. It may not be too far-fetched to suggest that Protestant individualism contributes to human distress! Fourth, the size factor does not seem to be significant in providing a better profile in regard to human distress as exemplified in the cases of Sweden, Denmark and Finland, each of which have just about 5-8 million population. Small is not always beautiful! Fifth, the United States of America, the biggest and certainly the most heterogeneous[4] of all the societies which figure in the table, provides the most distressing profile of human distress. Finally, some of the societies appear to have a positive profile with regard to human distress precisely because of the nature of the indicators used. More about this later.

Which of the polities are more developed, those scoring a high rank on human development, or on human freedom, but a lesser one on human distress? If the answer is that 'true development' is achieved only when there is a confluence, if not a fusion, between development and freedom and only when human distress is negligible, if not completely absent, one is only postulating an ideal type and not grappling with the complexity of empirical reality. Therefore, the point at issue is not one of identifying praxiological lags from an envisioned ideal type but that of an essential theoretical/conceptual gap. That is, one has to be clear about the very concept of a developed society.

I suggest that two vital elements have been ignored by the UNDP Report in constructing the quality of life index, namely a) *disparity* in income distribution and b) *pluralism*, that is, a congenial attitude of the 'ingroups' towards the 'outgroups'.

I want to underline the point about disparity because in the context of material prosperity experienced in developed societies it is widely held that the majority of the population has become middle class, and that even wage workers have undergone the process of embourgeoisement.

Consequently, the concern for disparity in incomes and increase in inequality has been dismissed as inconsequential by many. For example, Raymond Aron asked rhetorically: 'If the basic needs are provided in an approximately similar way, what real difference is made by great fortunes or huge incomes . . . ?' (1970:11). It does matter though because it is those who have huge incomes and great fortunes who set the modes of life-style by indulging in vulgar consumption patterns which in turn are aspired to by an increasing proportion of the population which may even resort to illegitimate means to achieve the socially approbated goals. Available evidence suggests that the gap between culturally valued goals and legitimate means to achieve them is an important source of crime and deviance, which in turn adversely affects the quality of life in society.

In so far as developed societies remain simply stratified it is relatively easy to maintain a uniformly high standard of living or at least to keep disparity within a limited range but when societies are heterogeneous–racially and culturally–both of these may not be possible. Thus the disparity in incomes among the citizens of homogeneous Scandinavian countries was only to the tune of five to seven times in the heyday of social democracy, while in the highly heterogeneous United States of America it is more than three hundred times! Incidentally, this disparity is not recent and not the creation of Republicans.

Affluent societies often need the presence of external elements. In the 1960s and 1970s one-third of Switzerland's labour force was constituted by foreign immigrant workers, who did all the menial jobs and spared the Swiss citizen this ordeal. Switzerland is certainly not an exception, and the presence of foreign immigrant workers is evident in all the affluent countries of Western Europe, which certainly affects the internal milieu of these societies. To quote Bottomore:

> The fact that these workers are citizens of another country, speak another language, and participate in a different culture, largely excludes them from political life in the countries where they work . . . The most significant features are the growing heterogeneity of the working class as a result of ethnic diversity, and the creation of a distinct, socially isolated sub-proletariat (1971:395).

That is, if disparity of incomes in a society goes beyond a certain range, if some sections of its population are marginalized and if the incidence of crime is substantial, the quality of life in such a society cannot be 'high' and it is odd to characterize it as 'developed'.

II

The appellation developed is intended to denote not only the level of material but also ideological advancement; the two relevant elements of ideology here being equality and individualism. Of the two concepts—equality and individualism—the former is fairly widely understood and even accepted. And yet it needs to be noted that the two referents of equality—equality of opportunity and distributive equality—connote radically different ideological positions. Although equality of opportunity is almost universally endorsed, a minority argues that it does block the blooming and flowering of gifted individuals who should not be subjected to the notion of formal equality (Letwin 1983), because in doing so societies are indulging in a self-denying ordeal in tapping the full potentialities available to them through extraordinary individuals. This aggressive individualism bordering on social-Darwinism seems to fit well with competitive capitalism which is a feature of all 'developed' societies. An inevitable corollary of this position is *not* to recognize any group-based or collectivity oriented inequality.

There are many more who oppose distributive equality because according to them it would sap the individuals of their vitality and motivation to work. However, the notion of basic or minimum needs (although there is no consensus on this) is increasingly endorsed in that all individuals, irrespective of their ability and contribution to society, are believed to be entitled to these needs. To put it differently, the notion of equality is conceptualized as providing the members of a society the opportunity to demonstrate their competence so that their entitlement to differential rewards is rendered legitimate.

Equality and individualism are inextricably intertwined in their origin and development (Beteille 1986: 121-34). And yet, while equality of opportunity has apparently acquired universal recognition as a value, this cannot be said about individualism. To complicate matters, their relationship is not unilinear in that in some contexts they reinforce each

other while in others they repel each other. Thus excessive individualism inevitably endangers the essence of equality by fostering intense competition, which invariably leads to inequality. The defence which is proffered in favour of this process is that one can only ensure equality of opportunity which should necessarily lead to inequality of rewards. And, it is often argued that only then would individuals be motivated to realize their full potentials. Thus the notion of individualism in the limited context of material rewards is ultimately latched on to an incentive system which enables human beings to become unequal.

But there are several difficulties here. First, it is impossible to provide equality of opportunity except in the formal-legal sense in so far as institutions, such as family and education, and the differential access to information and resources exists. Second, the very instruments through which equality is sought to be established (e.g. education) are often the instruments which reinforce the prevailing inequality. Third, the privileged in the system often honestly believe that they are inherently superior and the underprivileged are inferior. For these reasons, the notion of equality taken in conjunction with individualism is incapable of coping with the complex reality of heterogeneous, hierarchical and plural societies. On the other hand, I suggest that the notion of equality along with the idea of pluralism is capable of coping with the situation.

'Pluralism' is a much misunderstood concept and is used at least in two different senses. One set of authors following Furnival (1948) use the term to mean 'coexistence' of two or more segments of the population within a polity who produce and transact goods and services but do not transfuse culture or blood (see Kuper and Smith 1971). This form of 'pluralism' exists in situations in which the collectivities involved are graded into superiors and inferiors. Pluralism here essentially means institutionalized inequality, a feature of hierarchical societies. Another set of authors following Tocqueville (1956) refer to pluralism as a condition which emerges through division of labour and social differentiation articulated as political interests (see Kornhauser 1960; Shils 1956). Here the reference could be, and it often is, to the attachment of different segments of population within a polity, differentiated in terms of class, to different ideological orientations based on their material interests. This is the sense in which the notion of

pluralism is often used in the case of developed heterogeneous societies. When a developed polity tends to maintain its boundary *vis-a-vis* those who are defined as inferiors or outsiders, it tends to become a plural society in the sense in which I defined the term (see note 4).

I suggest that pluralism should be conceptualized as a value-orientation articulated in the dignified coexistence of a variety of groups in a polity. When economic and political interests are articulated in heterogeneous, hierarchical and plural societies there is often an interlinking between race, religion, and language on the one hand and material interests on the other. In such societies political parties or economic organizations may emerge to champion the cause of one or the other of these segments of the population, or their combinations. These efforts are characterized as parochial, fascist and/or anti-national depending upon the value-orientation of the designating group. That is, pluralism is relevant only in heterogeneous, hierarchical and plural societies. There is no moment for pluralism to crystallize and/or to be articulated in a homogeneous society because these societies need not recognize group-based inequality. On the other hand, in heterogeneous, hierarchical and plural societies group-based inequality invariably exists.

Keeping these preliminary clarifications in mind let us look at the internal milieu of the developed societies populated by Europeans. Broadly speaking, the three revolutions gave birth to the Three Worlds. The bourgeois revolution produced the First World, the proletarian revolution produced the Second World and the colonial revolution produced the Third World. But some of the ex-colonies underwent a double revolution—colonial and bourgeois—and got incorporated into the First World (North-America, Australia, etc). Typically, these societies of the New World are racial and cultural extensions of the Old World. Be that as it may, the internal social milieu of the societies of the New World is drastically different from that of the Old World. The manner in which the different segments of the population are incorporated into these societies accounts for this variation.

The 'new' nations, the United States of America, Canada, Australia, among others, have different layers of populations which are racially and culturally different. First, all of them have the original inhabitants (the First Nations) although their number and proportion remains substantially reduced today. Second, they all have the dominant white

migrants, with different socio-cultural layers based on religious (Protestant, Catholic, Jew) and linguistic background. Third, there is the non-white migrant population (mainly Asian), which arrived subsequently in search of better opportunities. Fourth, we find the black population, brought in initially as slaves. (This applies largely only to the US.) Given the different modes of incorporation, the structure of deprivation of these collectivities varies vastly.

As against the settler majority countries of the New World, the situation in the Old World is qualitatively different in that the overwhelming majority of the population in each of these polities is native-born or consists of nationals, that is, those who have a moral claim over the territory which they inhabit. In contrast, the societies of the New World are poly-ethnic in that no segment, save the natives, have a moral claim on the territory to which they belong (see, Oommen 1989: 279-305; 1994: 26-46). Consequently, not only does the deprivation of the populations which constitute these societies vary but their composition too is different. Thus if the most deprived category in the developed polities of Western Europe are the immigrant workers, particularly those of different races, languages and religions, in the New World they are the natives and the blacks. Clearly then, the developed societies vary widely in terms of their internal social milieu and in terms of the building-blocks which compose them.

As I see it, the challenge which is to be addressed by developed societies is the dilemma posed by the competing demands of equality and pluralism. The dilemma is not inherently irreconcilable but embedded in the very manner in which equality is sought to be defined and the nature of the unit invoked in establishing this equality, namely, the individual, ignoring the inequalities anchored to groups.

It is useful to state the argument succinctly at this point. I suggest that: a) diversity/heterogeneity is a social fact and pluralism is an attitude, a value-orientation to that social fact; b) there is a qualitative difference in the meaning of equality and, pursuantly, of inequality in stratified societies on the one hand and heterogeneous, hierarchical and plural societies on the other; c) equality sought to be established between individuals is inadequate to cope with the complexity of societies characterized by group-based inequalities; d) the ongoing process of globalization[5] is bound to render the groups in developed societies more

and more unequal; e) therefore pluralism as a value-orientation is to be nurtured by these societies if they are to deserve the appellation of developed; and hence f) the dilemma that they face can be tackled only by combining the pursuit of individual-based equality with pluralism, a collectivity-oriented value through which inter-group equality is sought to be achieved. Affirmative action or protective discrimination often becomes an imperative in such societies.

III

Let me now turn to the third item on my agenda. Why is it that developed societies have not faced the dilemma arising in reconciling pluralism and equality so far? As I see it, developed societies did not confront the irreconcilability between pluralism and equality earlier for the following reasons. First, empirically rooted social theory is hardly a couple of centuries old and it emerged and flourished mainly in the European world, and much of it developed only after the Second World War. As construction of social theory is geared to understand, analyse and/or to improve society, it is the immediate empirical reality of one's own society which moulds one's attempt to formulate social theory.[6] Diversity was not a major feature of European 'nation-states' and where it existed the tendency to homogenize was very strong on the part of the cultural mainstream and the state. This obliterated the very possibility or the need to recognize pluralism.

Second, the expression 'nation-state', a coinage which crystallized in Western Europe reflected the actual or hoped-for coterminality between nation and state, that is, culture and polity, which made it possible to focus on the individuals as the unit in defining the value of equality. And wherever the rupture between culture and polity existed it was invariably ignored in the name of 'national integration', which in effect meant state-building at the cost of weak and minority nations within these polities. In fact, more often that not, the measures undertaken in the name of nation-building were actually an enterprise in nation-destruction (Connor 1971-72:319-55).

Third, the presumed onward march of secularization and rationality assumed by the liberal expectancy and articulated through dichotomous constructions of social reality led to the untenable belief that ascriptive

affiliations and primordial ties are bound to disappear from developed societies. The faith in possessive individualism was reinforced by the belief in the existence of this process. However, the incessant search for tradition and roots, the re-discovery of primary groups, the re-emergence of primordial collectivism and the persisting and virulent expression of social and cultural xenophobia disproved the above beliefs and assumptions (van den Berghe 1983:238-52).

Fourth, the excessive importance and privileged position assigned to class and class analysis in understanding the stratification system of developed industrial societies ignored the durable character of the elements of social structure such as race, religion and language. This seen in conjunction with the third reason given above reinforced the need and possibility of celebrating individualism as a value, nay, as a cult.

Fifth, developed societies are or happen to be Western and Christian, except for a few new entrants, such as Japan and the Asian Tigers which are usually treated as aberrations, at best exceptions. This implied, although it was not always stated explicitly, that certain religious values promoted development. It is often argued that if Protestant ethic is accepted and achievement motivation is endorsed, others too will and can reach the same goal. In fact, some even suggest that Protestant Christianity, given its emphasis on the individual, is conducive to democracy. Thus it is easy to see the nexus between capitalism, democracy and Protestant. Christianity, as all three sacralize individualism. However, it was Christianity which introduced the concept of equality for the first time in human history; not only equality of all human individuals in the eyes of God, but also of all 'nations' which were considered but branches of a more general humanity. The current overemphasis on individualism is, therefore, somewhat paradoxical.

Sixth, as pluralism and individual-based equality are believed to be conceptually irreconcilable, heterogeneity is defined and cognized as constituted by a continuum of inferior and superior elements, in fact, a hierarchy. Consequently, different physical types (races, if you prefer), religions (including denominations) and nations (linguistic collectivities with a territorial base) tend to get ordered into a hierarchy creating superordinate/subordinate relationships which make it difficult to apply

the notion of equality to these groups. This is a conceptual trap into which Western social science has fallen, even if unwittingly.

Finally, it needs to be stated that the conceptions of society held by monism and pluralism differ radically. If the monists envision a homogeneous society of the same race, religion and/or speech community, pluralists seek to create a polity of citizens with equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities, even if they are drawn from utterly different backgrounds. While the former insists that the individual should be the basic unit, the latter focuses on collectivities and communities. Admittedly, individual-collectivity relations are more complex and intricate in heterogeneous, hierarchical and plural societies.

To recapitulate, equality anchored to individuals is theoretically plausible and praxiologically tenable in stratified societies where classes, gender and age groups constitute the basic building blocks of social structure. That is, in those societies where the individual is the unit of decision-making, market economy and majoritarian democracy are practical propositions. But in other societies collectivities as against the individual become the salient units of social structure and hence market economy and majoritarian democracy need to be tempered and adapted so as to avoid the intense competition which is dysfunctional, particularly for the weak and the minorities. Pursuantly, equality as conceptualized in and applied to the former type is not entirely amenable for application in the latter.

It is necessary to anticipate and answer a question at this juncture, namely, what is the rationale in maintaining that there is a qualitative difference in the nature of inequality between stratified societies on the one hand and heterogeneous, hierarchical and plural societies on the other? To answer this question, we need to note that there are essentially two sources of inequality: performance and perception (Beteille 1986: 121-34). Generally speaking, inequality in homogeneous societies emanates out of differences in performance which can be improved and hence abolished through appropriate socialization within the family, inculcation of relevant values, adequate education, training, and so on. That is, inequality in stratified societies can be eliminated with the help of appropriate social engineering. This is exemplified by the increasing mobility among classes, gender and age groups in contemporary societies. That is, even if a group has been defined hitherto as inferior in

performance, it is relatively easy to change this evaluation in stratified societies.

Inequality in heterogeneous, hierarchical and plural societies is largely based on the dominant collectivity's perception of the quality of performance of the dominated collectivity. This may have nothing to do with the actual quality of performance of the collectivity in question but the dominant collectivity's cognition and evaluation about the dominated collectivity's history and culture. Therefore, eradicating inequality in such societies is not simply a matter of social engineering but also one of changing the dominant collectivity's evaluation about the quality of performance of the dominated collectivity. If such a change does not take place there are only three routes to 'solve' the problem, all of which are geared to homogenization. The 'final solution' is genocide: clearly the victims are the weak and/or the minorities. The second is liquidating diversity through assimilation of the weak; the extreme measure being intermarriages. While intermarriage across diverse groups may be welcomed if done voluntarily, it cannot be advocated as a formal measure to achieve equality because this entails coercion. Third, bifurcation of the society into homogeneous units, that is, secession, based on race, religion or language which clearly smacks of intolerance. If the first solution results in the physical annihilation of identity groups, the second solution leads to the annihilation of cultural diversity. The third assumes that the coexistence of diversity and crystallization of pluralism are impossible.

I am making this point because the quest for homogenization is often viewed as a quest for equality, that is, coexistence of social closure and equality is believed to have a greater chance as compared with the coexistence of diversity and equality. To put it differently, in mono-national polities equality is pursued through the fusion of nationality and citizenship. This is not possible in heterogeneous, hierarchical and plural societies, because the disjuncture between citizenship and nationality, the latter being defined in terms of membership in different racial, religious or language groups (not necessarily a correct definition) is often the source of inequality (Oommen 1997 forthcoming).

The oppressed and the exploited do not often accept the premise that the state is an impartial or final arbiter. They are not satisfied by simply

asking the question, 'what is the state?' but pose the problematique, 'who is the state?' That is, who wields power and authority? Thus decentralization of authority across primordial collectivities which is relevant only to heterogeneous, hierarchical and plural societies is a much more vexatious process as compared with dispersal of power across classes, gender, or age-groups. That is, the primordial groups of such societies may often pursue the goal of shared sovereignty, an untenable quest in stratified societies.[7] Therefore it is not surprising that some would argue for the homogenization of societies because such societies are likely to be more egalitarian and participative.

However, the proposition is not admissible for three reasons. First, to homogenize often means to establish the hegemony of the dominant collectivity, annihilation of the weak and minority collectivities or at the best their assimilation into an artificially contrived cultural mainstream, leading to the eclipse of their identity. Second, most polities as they are constituted, draw their population from diverse sources. Therefore, annihilation and assimilation endanger the principles of maintaining diversity and developing pluralism. Third, contemporary societies are constantly exposed to alien influences and hence characterized by frayed edges and loose textures. If anything, the ongoing process of globalization would intensify this trend. In such a situation the only viable option is to accommodate diversity, foster pluralism and nurture inter-group equality.

I have hinted above that in terms of heterogeneity and plurality the 'developed' European societies differ substantially. One may identify seven different situations in this context: 1) The 'Old World' heterogeneous polities in which the majority live in their traditional homelands. The prominent examples are the United Kingdom, Belgium and Spain. 2) Situations where nationals and migrants from equally developed societies may live together, as exemplified by French migrants in Germany or vice versa. 3) Nationals from the affluent countries of Europe and migrants from less developed countries of Europe, such as Greece, Portugal, Ireland, and so on, who live together. 4) Nationals from affluent countries of Europe and migrants of non-European background, particularly from Africa and Asia, living together. 5) Migrants of the same race who are linguistically and/or denominationally different coming to live together in the 'new nations'

as exemplified by the English and the French in Canada or a variety of European groups in the US. 6) First-Nations, the original inhabitants of the New World, who live along with their oppressive conquerors and dominant colonizers. Examples of these are afforded by Australia, Canada and the US. 7) The ex-slaves who were brought to the colonies and the dominant migrants who brought them, living together as in the case of the blacks and whites in the US. Clearly, some of these situations are more complex when viewed in terms of the number of elements present and the difference between them.

The seven situations listed above may be grouped into three from the perspective of the range of inequality prevalent in them. Situations 1, 2 and 5 may be described as those of cultural diversity among equals. Situation 3 does pose the problem of inequality but in a mild form. However, situations 4, 6 and 7 do pose serious problems of equality. That is, diversity need not automatically result in inequality, but it does so depending upon the background of the constituting elements and the modes of their incorporation.

IV

Let me conclude this paper by attempting an answer to the question: What is the compelling need for a new agenda?

The radical rupture between tradition and modernity began in Europe with the emergence of the twin values of equality and individualism. The acceptance and practice of these values was possible only in stratified societies. In fact, the very emergence of nation-states in Western Europe could be interpreted as a response to this need. But individual-based equality is conceptually inadequate and praxiologically untenable in heterogeneous, hierarchical and plural societies till such time that inter-group equality is not established, as the building blocks of such societies are often groups of different racial, religious and linguistic backgrounds, some of whom are subjected to cumulative inequality and oppression. Inter-group equality should be established as a prerequisite in such societies so that all the constituting collectivities are in a position to contribute their share in all contexts and at all levels to the running of the system. This in turn calls for the recognition and nurturing of pluralism as a value.

Three historical and contemporary developments have necessitated the above noted change in value orientation. First, European colonization which produced racially and culturally heterogeneous societies. Second, the emergence of the European Union wherein cultural heterogeneity is manifold, as compared with the relatively homogeneous 'nation-states' of Europe. Third, the ongoing process of globalization which necessitates the multi-directional flow and consequent coexistence of populations, with differing racial and cultural backgrounds.

Given such a complex empirical scenario, pluralization, both within and across, of societies seems to be the only viable alternative. Pluralization is to be discerned temporally, spatially and culturally. By alluding to temporality I am suggesting that social reality is interlocked into the past-present-future syndrome. No society can or even needs to shed its tradition in its entirety; it should retain the assets in its tradition and nurture them. Similarly, no society can or should ignore the process of modernization but borrow selectively those elements of modernity which augment its quality of life. Viewed thus, pluralization is a process of synthesizing tradition and modernity; it avoids the prevalent widespread tendency of instant contemporization in the cognition of human reality.

Second, societies have territorial dimensions; in spite of globalization and the emergence of 'one world', they are located in different regions with different ecological and environmental features. This spatial situational specificity produces ecological and environmental pluralism. Third, the above two in conjunction produce differences in economy, values, and institutions. Any society which wants to retain its authenticity, that is, identity and specificity, should pursue the path of pluralization instead of jumping on to the bandwagon of globalization.

I must hasten to add here that the plea for pluralization is not an advocacy for cultural relativism. Relativism insists on retaining all aspects of societies and cultures in their pristine purity. The ideology of relativism is inimical to the very process of transformation, it insists on the retention of tradition, irrespective of its content, perpetuating obscurantism and fundamentalism. Pluralization, then, is a process different from both globalism, which ignores the specificities of cultures and locales, and relativism which insists on the retention of all aspects of tradition ignoring context and content. It is a selective, creative response

to both globalization and localization.

Equality, to be authentic, will have to be conceptualized and practiced in the world of concrete reality, which is a diverse one. No amount of commitment to the principle of equality by the privileged will make it viable from the perspective of the disadvantaged. Equality, to be authentic in a diverse world, will have to be seen in conjunction with collective identity. This calls for situating the equality of collectivities and equality of individuals in a sequential chain. To insist on the latter without providing for the former, its prerequisite, is to put the cart before the horse.

NOTES

This paper is a revised version of a talk delivered at Collegium Budapest, Budapest, Hungary on 10 November 1994.

1. The indicators of human distress included in the UNDP Report are murders, suicides, rapes, drug crimes, prisoners, pollution and unemployment. I have not incorporated the last item into table 1., but that does not affect my argument.
2. The term 'nation-state' assumes that there is coterminality between state and nation. However, in the vast majority of the cases this is not true and hence it may be better to use the term polity.
3. It may be noted that the present analysis applies the adjective 'European' not only to geographical Europe but also to those regions which have been colonized and appropriated by them, although, of course the reference is confined to the developed ones.
4. It is necessary to recognize the existence of four different types of societies—stratified, heterogeneous, hierarchical and plural. All societies are stratified on the basis of age, gender and class. But if a society's population is drawn from the same race, religion and/or linguistic group, it could be said to be homogeneous. Conversely, multiracial, multi-national, multi-religious and poly-ethnic polities may be referred to as heterogeneous societies. In this type of society, there is a possibility of inequality becoming a formal feature based on race (e.g., South Africa, until recently) or caste (e.g., India, before 1947), which also renders them hierarchical societies. That is, heterogeneous societies with institutionalized inequality are hierarchical. But a heterogeneous society need not be hierarchical as racially and/or culturally diverse groups in the polity may have socio-economic equality.

   In the cases of stratified, heterogeneous and hierarchical societies, however, the internality of the constituting elements are not questioned. Thus, the American 'Negro', the Indian 'untouchable' and the Greek 'slave' were all accepted as essential and useful internal elements although equality was not granted to them. In contrast, the internality of one or another segment in a plural society is questioned, that is, a plural society is polarized between insiders and outsiders. Sometimes, the insiders may be marginalized (e.g., the First Nations in the New World) and the outsiders became dominant and sometimes the outsiders may be marginalized and deprived of their rights (e.g., Indians in Fiji, or guest workers in Western Europe). It is of signal importance to note that the first three types of societies are not either or

but additive types. That is, culturally diverse societies are also stratified. Hierarchical societies are stratified and heterogeneous. But plural societies are stratified and heterogeneous although they may or may not be hierarchical. However, they have one or more segments whose internality to the polity is questioned.

5. However, it may be noted here that while globalization facilitates the untrammelled flow of capital from the developed to the less developed world, but developed countries try to prevent the flow of labour from the underdeveloped countries thereby blocking globalization.
6. The discipline of social/cultural anthropology conceived as and devoted to the study of other societies was geared to civilize the 'primitive' and 'backward' societies and to facilitate colonial administration and christianization. While the study of other societies did eventually contribute to social theory, its initial aim was different.
7. This is not to deny the fact that a stratified society may get divided into two or more sovereign states based on secular ideology (e.g. Germany, Korea). However, the natural affinity between the populations of these states will be maintained in spite of the artificial vivisection of the society.

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ON REALITY: ITS PERCEPTION AND CONSTRUCTION

Satish Saberwal

> It does not need a dramatic disaster to change the intellectual outlook of a generation. It only needs a slight change of direction, the end of expansion, the drying up of sources of information, a series of small setbacks, a persistent sense that nothing is going well.
>
> —R. W. Southern

I
INTRODUCTION

BACK in the mid-1970s I toyed with the ambition of writing a critique of Professor Ramkrishna Mukherjee's sociological work. To this end, I read through a large part of his corpus of works–and made extensive notes on it. What struck me then was his abiding interest in characterizing 'reality', an interest which is echoed in his later work, *Systemic Sociology* (1993). While I could not carry that project to a conclusion, the question of how to characterize reality has continued to nag me.[1]

Interpretations of reality may exist, of course, at several levels, ranging from a focus on epochs and civilizations to one on the passing moment. Furthermore, interpreting and understanding my own ongoing experience, academic and personal, has been a long-term preoccupation with me.[2] I do this by: (a) bringing whatever little I know of the social sciences (and other fields) to bear upon my ongoing observations; (b) isolating what appear to be the key, operative processes in the field under observation, be these biological, psychic, social, political, or other;

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and (c) placing these operative processes in relation to the long-term historical context which gave rise to them.

Insofar as these operative processes, and their historical origins, are located accurately, one may claim to have recognized a little bit of 'reality'.[3] One perceives more of its aspects, however, as this exploration stretches over diverse processes and historical contexts. These aspects are so varied that one has to lift one's focus to a more abstract level: to search for distinctions and conceptions which would enable us to talk intelligibly about the nature of reality in the round.

I should say that these notes began as an anthropologist's attempt to keep his own work in order. Philosophers handle the same terms very differently, stressing, on one side, the analytic adequacy of the distinctions made and, on the other, their long lineages in the history of ideas.

A category as encompassing as 'reality' has to have many dimensions, and a preliminary orientation to them is necessary (Section II). Our initial perception of any phenomenon is necessarily subjective, often idiosyncratic, and prone to error; yet how we perceive it, what meaning we read into it, how we define it—on that basis alone can we act in relation to the phenomenon (Section III). The idiosyncrasy, the subjective character, of our perception has to be transcended if cooperative activity is to become possible: that is to say, 'intersubjective agreement' is a precondition for the orderly flow of everyday social existence (Section IV). The reach of such agreement may be broadened further yet.

This possibility of inter-subjective agreement is carried further in scholarship and, especially, in scientific activity. This possibility rests on two bases: (1) a striving in the scientific community for intersubjective agreement spanning the whole of the concerned community of today and tomorrow—regardless of differences of culture, nationality, gender, or whatever; and (2) a search for shared methods, criteria, standards, and forms of interpretation which can underpin such allegiance to a common ethic across space and time (Section V). Scholarship and science may be seen as specialized activities which may enable one to perceive reality in a more 'objective' manner.

Much of the expansive vigour of the West, in recent centuries, has emerged from secular, long term improvements in its devices for

perceiving reality; and this possibility germinated in Europe's historical experience, during and after the Middle Ages (Section VI).[4]

A sociologist may legitimately evade the question: 'How are perceptions formed?'—which properly belongs to psychology. The methods of individual and social psychology are experimental; their foci rest on the elementary processes which go into the formation of perceptions concerning simple objects, other persons, and the like. Social psychologists have been straining towards comprehending more complex objects of perception, however, and have linked up with anthropologists in considering the implications of cultural difference for perception (Tajfel 1969 has reviewed the field).[5]

II
DIMENSIONS OF REALITY

There are numerous dimensions along which the nature, and the perception, of reality can vary. I shall consider three:

1. The distinction between the physical and the cultural. A physical or biological phenomenon, say death, may carry a variety of meanings in different cultures. Each culture recognizes the meaning—the reality—of death in a distinctive way, though the underlying physical phenomenon is identical.
2. The twin issues of *unit size* or scale, which concerns the phenomenal level, and that of *detail*, which concerns our manner of perceiving a phenomenon. These two issues may be considered together.
3. The question of *variability* in phenomena. This is linked with the level of *abstraction* at which we conceptualize a phenomenon.

Physical/Cultural

To start with one kind of distinction, my father's death is a kind of reality; and if this leaves me polluted for a period, that pollution too is real. In one case, however, the reality is physical; in the other, it is cultural. *Physical reality* is culture-free; fathers and others die in every society. *Cultural reality* refers to the terms of perception which are culturally specific.[6] Pollution at death of close kin is observed only in

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some societies, though the end of a life has implications serious enough that every society needs to take notice, and to have a more or less patterned, shared form for responding to the occasion.

Many of the conceptions in the cultural realm take their cue from physical realities; but a conception formed in any one culture gets much of its form and content in the presuppositions generally prevalent in that culture: the idea of pollution used to pervade a great deal more than just death in my culture. That is to say, apparently identical physical reality may carry vastly different meanings in different cultural contexts: to continue with our example of death, it may be an occasion for quiet mourning in one culture, for intense prayer in another, and for loud lamentation in yet another. In the social sciences, recognition of such diversity is elementary.

Unit Size or Scale

The difference of size or scale between the rock outside my house and a great mountain is obvious enough. Obvious, too, is the difference of scale between a person and a civilization. We should notice, however, that a qualitative change has been taking place in the world around us. In the social realm, it used to be that most lives were confined within spaces which could be traversed in a day's walk. In recent centuries, however, we have witnessed a manifold expansion of the scales of possible social activities and of possible social influences. We owe this dramatic expansion of possible lifespace to such technology as the railways and the internet computer network and to such institutions as a general election, a great newspaper, and a stock exchange.

To capture the outcome of these tendencies, it is common to use terms like the 'global village'. There is irony to such terms. A scarcely literate traveller may indeed be borne across continents swiftly; yet (s)he may command the skills of the village only, being clueless at the global level.

The foregoing refers to differences in scales of phenomenal reality; but any phenomenon may be observed and represented on different scales, as with the scale of a map, taking in corresponding levels of detail. Illustratively, the edge of a blade, used for shaving, has one kind of image to the naked eye; when examined under a powerful microscope the image is on a larger scale, it is much more detailed. The different

images–and levels of detail–refer to the same reality, and there are routines to observe in moving from one level to another. If you are doing research on blades, you would have learned how to translate what you observe under the microscope into its likely feel against the face while shaving.

The point to remember is that the logic operative at one level of detail may not be the same as would apply at a different level. If one moves from one to another carelessly, the consequences may be as incongruous as those of mistaking a town map for a continental one, or historical time for geological time.[7]

Variability/Abstraction/Durability

Phenomena observable in life are immensely variable. What we observe may change from one day to the next, one moment to the next: my friend's moods of elation, anger, or despair; a monsoon day changing from cloudy skies to torrential rain to bright sunshine; or the out-of-control truck hurtling towards me. A great novelist, or ethnographer, can indeed capture a palpable feel for such experienced situations: what piety is like in a great mosque; or what it felt like when disaster struck Bhopal that night. Such reportage is central to scientific activity (Runciman 1983: Ch. 4).

Scholarship commonly engages with social and other reality at another level too. It seeks the general principles and theories with which to explain observations: the biochemical and psychological bases of changing moods; the general principles of cloud formation, movement, and precipitation; the cultural bases of religious belief; and so on. Such principles and theories must (necessarily) be sought at a relatively abstract level. The concern with 'reality' remains; the level of abstraction changes.

Scientific activity routinely begins with observable phenomena and tries to climb a *ladder of abstraction*.[8] This has two consequences: (1) the *variability* gets abstracted away at successive rungs; and (2) the abstract formulations–general principles, theories–conceive of phenomena at relatively invariant levels. These abstract theories and principles may explain such situations in a variety of times and places.

Let us look at the different rungs of the ladder of abstraction. We have noted the ground level of observations, with their high variability,

already. At some distance from this level is another order of reality which (1) is human-made, and therefore subject to change, and (2) is part of a shared social tradition, set into relatively 'firm moulds–'institutionalized'–and therefore is subject to a relatively slow pace of change. A higher level of abstraction is also available in the social realm. At this level lie the recognitions that: (a) every language has patterning in multiple layers (at the levels of sounds employed, *phonemes*; minimal units of meaning, *morphemes*, *lexemes*, etc.); (b) one's cultural resources fashion, very largely, one's perceptions and one's interpretations of complex experience; (c) the dreams, myths, and religious beliefs generated in a society are projective systems explicable with reference to workaday personal and collective experiences in that society; and so forth.

Beyond this is the level of timeless realities which, once recognized, have a persistence amidst the enveloping flux: for example, the Periodic Table of Elements, or Newton's Laws of Motion. Now three centuries old, these latter, though subsumed in more complex formulations, remain valid within specified conditions.

Note that, as we move up the level of abstraction, and attain formulations with higher levels of invariance, we get formulations which have greater *durability*. The validity of the basic laws of physics stretches beyond the emergence of human beings on the evolutionary scene. That is why an astrophysicist can lean on them to study distant galaxies confidently.

Concerning these several rungs of reality, I wish to make two points, namely, that each rung has its own characteristic texture, and that appraising each requires techniques whose shaping has historically been a matter of much trial and error historically.

The foregoing hints at the great variety of levels of phenomenal reality, and the diverse modes of observing and conceptualizing that reality which are available to us. It is appropriate, therefore, to take due care in picking one's terms when speaking of 'reality'.

Before proceeding further, I wish to narrate a set of events in and around the campus of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) during the widespread anti-Sikh riots in Delhi in November 1984. This account will anchor some of the later discussion.

III
DEFINING A SITUATION: AN ACCOUNT OF EVENTS IN NOVEMBER 1984

On the last day of October, Indira Gandhi had been assassinated. The next day, November 1, a busload of outsiders tried, unsuccessfully, to enter the JNU campus, presumably in search of Sikhs, and there were rumours of imminent attacks. For several days following, therefore, the campus was astir, with round-the-clock vigil to meet any possible attack from outside.

Much of this concern turned on an urbanized 'village' which shares a border road with the campus. One night, I think on November 3, a good deal of shouting was heard from the village side of the road, and hundreds of men and women assembled on the JNU side at the boundary wall, looking out on the village. Apprehension of an attack from the village was acute. In fact nothing happened.

The next morning, a colleague and I thought of going to the village to enquire why there had been such a racket the previous night. Our first contact was a JNU staff member who lives in the village and who led us to others. Village elders, whom we had no reason to doubt, insisted that they had no hostile intent towards the university. The noise, they explained, had come from villagers because they had feared an attack by Sikhs. Some of these fears, admittedly, rested on nothing more substantial than the sound of crackers which pranksters had saved over from the Diwali festival. Shouting had been part of *their* defensive preparation *vis-a-vis* the Sikhs. Note how this fear of the Sikhs was part of at least some villagers' sense of reality even though no Sikh may have been in a position to attack the village. Subsequently, as the residents of the campus proceeded to formulate their own construct of reality, the sounds from the village were interpreted as being hostile.

A fair number of residents in the village finds lower level employment in the university, and sometimes persons working or studying in the university rent accommodation in the village. Many villagers collect wood and use pasturage in the campus routinely, and occasionally a student locates a minor field study in the village. Yet significant contacts, and communication, between the university and the village opposite have been scant. That is why, in November 1984,

campus residents grossly misinterpreted the sounds coming from the village.

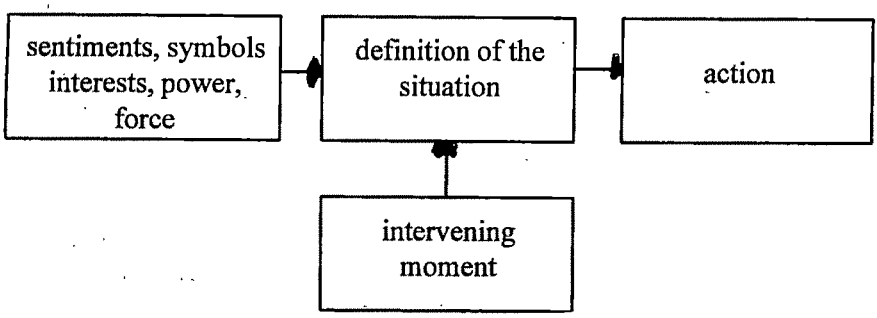
Defining a Situation

'Defining the situation' is a phrase sociologists often use (e.g. Merton 1948, following W. I. Thomas). To define a situation is to interpret that situation, to read a particular meaning into it, at a given time.[9] The campus defined the situation on the premise of the villagers' hostile intent, villagers on that of the Sikhs' hostile intent. Both these notions of reality—the villagers' and the campus's—were erroneous. Both suffered an acute sense of threat and insecurity when, on independent evidence, or, 'in reality', there was no threat 'out there'. Yet until such error is recognized, the only available description of reality—on which we can base our intentions and actions—is the one given to us by our immediate perception and judgement, howsoever faulty these may be. These perceptions and judgements go into shaping a certain mental state which influences what we choose to do.

The foregoing implies that, in defining a situation, we may have a certain choice, a certain room for manoeuvre. To take an instance from modern Indian history, Mohamed Ali could be a spokesman for 'Muslim interests' almost exclusively, before his incarceration during World War I, and again after Khilafat had collapsed. During the Khilafat phase, however, he was, along with Gandhi and others, a full blooded Indian nationalist (Hasan 1979). Again, between 1937 and 1946, a good many Muslims in the subcontinent changed their definition of their political situation: they voted for the Muslim League and, implicitly, for the creation of Pakistan. Politically, the mid-40s were marked—as many periods are marked—by multiple, competing definitions of the situation in India: say those associated with the Congress, the Muslim League, R. S. S., the Princes, the regional parties, the Raj, and so on. Now, if one definition of the situation comes to prevail over the other(s), it is because of the variety of elements which happen to buttress that way of looking at things (fig. 1).

What are the elements that can go into one's defining a situation in a particular way? Anything that counts in having you believe one thing rather than another: fig. 1 lists sentiments, symbols, interests, power, and force.[10] Furthermore, members of a group—a sect, a faction, a country at

Fig. 1: *Definition of a Situation*



war–may persuade each other of the absolute truth of even their most arbitrary notions.[11]

There are two things to remember here:

1. In analysing an episode or a larger happening, when we say that X defined the situation as one of threat or opportunity or cordiality, giving it a particular meaning, we are recognizing an "intervening moment" in our analysis: it specifies the mental state which later yielded a particular course of action.
2. When we say that an event, a social outcome, resulted from a certain definition of the situation, this can only be a preliminary step in the analytic task. It remains then to ask: What produced that mental state? Why did that definition came to prevail over the alternative(s)?

Reality Testing

Insofar as my definition of a situation–physical or social–is consistent with 'what it really is like', this improves my capacity to 'deal' with it, that is, my capacity to anticipate the course it is likely to take, in order to avail of an opportunity, forestall a threat, or whatever. *Reality*, we may say, *is that which we have to take into account lest, it surprise us with its consequences*. Hence the importance of reality testing: of checking out my notion of what a particular slice of reality is like.

I may suspect that a crowd intends to attack me, when in fact its members are only teasing me. I could check out my suspicion by making discreet enquiries, and observations, to see whether their intention is

indeed hostile. In perceiving reality, however, we may err in two directions. On one side, we may assume that something exists when evidence from other sources would suggest that it does not, as in the instance just noted. The opposite error also is possible: we assume that something does not exist when information from additional sources might suggest that it does. Surrounded by a crowd, I may be clueless about an undercurrent of antagonism, which may have grown without my being sensitive to it.[12]

A long term advantage lies in defining reality in ways that take account of evidence from the widest variety of sources feasible. This includes a consideration of how *others* define the various situations. This latter is a cultivated skill; it is a matter of learning *to face up to reality as it is.*

VI
PERCEPTION AND CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

Perception

The reality I perceive may be social, as in my perception of my neighbour's intentions, or it may be physical, as in my perception of the imminence of monsoon rain. My perception of any particular phenomenon may be more or less accurate, depending upon my procedures; and these may be naive, resting on the everyday categories and routines of my society, or these may be mediated, possibly, by my understanding of the principles of psychology, physics, and the like.

Perception, in the first instance, is necessarily personal, subjective. It is *naive*, in the sense that its own premises are not ordinarily subjected to critical appraisal. Yet, in a functioning society, everyday social practice rests crucially on agreement between different persons, on an *inter-subjective agreement*, between participants in an activity, over what the phenomena at issue really are; such agreement defines the situation collectively. Such inter-subjective agreement is necessary even though its premises would not ordinarily be examined critically; indeed, the participants would be aware of the *possibility* of such examination only rarely.

How I perceive reality becomes the basis for my actions and, therefore, goes into renewing and reconstituting–into constructing–the

reality that you may perceive, and vice versa. We construct a large part of the reality which becomes an object for others to cope with–and to interpret. Perception and construction are, thus, successive moments in the social dialectic.

This inter-subjective agreement rests commonly on the cultural assumptions which underlie the particular practice. If everyone in my community agrees that my father's death has indeed polluted me, this agreement arises from accepting the whole Brahminical ideology of purity and pollution. This has implications:

1. Defining a situation one way rather than another makes a difference. My state of pollution, following my father's death, imposes a range of obligations on me which would not apply in a society which does not recognize such a state.
2. Inter-subjective agreement, here, is culturally specific; an ordinary Kenyan or a Dane would not find it easy to concur in this belief.

It is possible to push the search for agreement between observers–inter-subjective agreement–beyond the limits of a specific culture; indeed such a drive underlies a great deal of science and scholarship. In Section V I will return to these issues.

Construction

Although the particular ways of constructing–and transmitting–social reality are necessarily a social process, the process can scarcely proceed except through *particular persons*. We have to recognize two levels. First, we construct our image of reality with such materials as our perceptions make available to us: I propose to call these our *constructs* of reality. Social reality exists, that is to say, in the form of a multitude of *personal* constructs of that reality–even though the requisite materials may be drawn from a shared cultural storehouse. To recall the incidents of November 1984, the villagers' perceptions led them to particular constructs of reality and then to certain actions; this latter provided the stimuli with which residents of the university campus constructed their image of reality, the stimuli around which the campus defined the situation at its perimeter. We shall return to the personal constructs of reality below.

Second, there is the socially constructed reality. Whatever the physical universe is itself like, a large part of the reality around us is constituted through human intentions, designs, and efforts: think of the telephone system; of the complex of doctors, drugs, chemists, and hospitals; of the universities; of the interlinked religious beliefs, practices, shrines, institutions; and so forth. What is constituted may be physical, or it may be a body of ideas.

These are man-made realities which we make, remake, and sometimes modify as we go on our daily rounds. We make them not individually but collectively, in the course of our interactions; we make them not instantly but as part of a tradition or traditions which, in turn, we make, remake, and sometimes modify. What (reality) you perceive or experience is commonly what someone else has put together. For something like my experience of a musical tradition, that putting together may, of course, have been a long process, a long time ago, becoming available as part of my growing up.

These constructed structures of reality emerge in historical processes; and these processes may be swift, as in a revolution, or slow, as in the shaping of a language. These structures of reality persist through patterned, institutionalized interactions and relationships–whose study lies at the heart of sociology, our discipline.

Embodied in institutions and in patterned forms of conduct, such realities make demands which are no less inexorable than the realities of nature: a monsoon shower and an income tax assessment can seem equally arbitrary and equally inescapable. These constructed structures of reality –traffic lights, the surgeon's orders, the pollution from someone's touch–can have a coercive potential that Newton's Laws of Motion and the like may not always have.[13] We flout them at our own risk.

Any consideration of the 'social construction of reality' reminds us of the terms of the dialectic which Berger and Luckmann (1966: 79) summed up so pithily: 'Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product' (i.e., society makes man). I have noted the man-made character of social arrangements and institutions; and also the presence and the availability of these social arrangements as an external reality. These are available both to constrain us and to encourage and inspire us on occasion. To complete the

as exemplified by the English and the French in Canada or a variety of European groups in the US. 6) First-Nations, the original inhabitants of the New World, who live along with their oppressive conquerors and dominant colonizers. Examples of these are afforded by Australia, Canada and the US. 7) The ex-slaves who were brought to the colonies and the dominant migrants who brought them, living together as in the case of the blacks and whites in the US. Clearly, some of these situations are more complex when viewed in terms of the number of elements present and the difference between them.

The seven situations listed above may be grouped into three from the perspective of the range of inequality prevalent in them. Situations 1, 2 and 5 may be described as those of cultural diversity among equals. Situation 3 does pose the problem of inequality but in a mild form. However, situations 4, 6 and 7 do pose serious problems of equality. That is, diversity need not automatically result in inequality, but it does so depending upon the background of the constituting elements and the modes of their incorporation.

IV

Let me conclude this paper by attempting an answer to the question: What is the compelling need for a new agenda?

The radical rupture between tradition and modernity began in Europe with the emergence of the twin values of equality and individualism. The acceptance and practice of these values was possible only in stratified societies. In fact, the very emergence of nation-states in Western Europe could be interpreted as a response to this need. But individual-based equality is conceptually inadequate and praxiologically untenable in heterogeneous, hierarchical and plural societies till such time that inter-group equality is not established, as the building blocks of such societies are often groups of different racial, religious and linguistic backgrounds, some of whom are subjected to cumulative inequality and oppression. Inter-group equality should be established as a prerequisite in such societies so that all the constituting collectivities are in a position to contribute their share in all contexts and at all levels to the running of the system. This in turn calls for the recognition and nurturing of pluralism as a value.

Three historical and contemporary developments have necessitated the above noted change in value orientation. First, European colonization which produced racially and culturally heterogeneous societies. Second, the emergence of the European Union wherein cultural heterogeneity is manifold, as compared with the relatively homogeneous 'nation-states' of Europe. Third, the ongoing process of globalization which necessitates the multi-directional flow and consequent coexistence of populations, with differing racial and cultural backgrounds.

Given such a complex empirical scenario, pluralization, both within and across, of societies seems to be the only viable alternative. Pluralization is to be discerned temporally, spatially and culturally. By alluding to temporality I am suggesting that social reality is interlocked into the past-present-future syndrome. No society can or even needs to shed its tradition in its entirety; it should retain the assets in its tradition and nurture them. Similarly, no society can or should ignore the process of modernization but borrow selectively those elements of modernity which augment its quality of life. Viewed thus, pluralization is a process of synthesizing tradition and modernity; it avoids the prevalent widespread tendency of instant contemporization in the cognition of human reality.

Second, societies have territorial dimensions; in spite of globalization and the emergence of 'one world', they are located in different regions with different ecological and environmental features. This spatial situational specificity produces ecological and environmental pluralism. Third, the above two in conjunction produce differences in economy, values, and institutions. Any society which wants to retain its authenticity, that is, identity and specificity, should pursue the path of pluralization instead of jumping on to the bandwagon of globalization.

I must hasten to add here that the plea for pluralization is not an advocacy for cultural relativism. Relativism insists on retaining all aspects of societies and cultures in their pristine purity. The ideology of relativism is inimical to the very process of transformation, it insists on the retention of tradition, irrespective of its content, perpetuating obscurantism and fundamentalism. Pluralization, then, is a process different from both globalism, which ignores the specificities of cultures and locales, and relativism which insists on the retention of all aspects of tradition ignoring context and content. It is a selective, creative response

to both globalization and localization.

Equality, to be authentic, will have to be conceptualized and practiced in the world of concrete reality, which is a diverse one. No amount of commitment to the principle of equality by the privileged will make it viable from the perspective of the disadvantaged. Equality, to be authentic in a diverse world, will have to be seen in conjunction with collective identity. This calls for situating the equality of collectivities and equality of individuals in a sequential chain. To insist on the latter without providing for the former, its prerequisite, is to put the cart before the horse.

NOTES

This paper is a revised version of a talk delivered at Collegium Budapest, Budapest, Hungary on 10 November 1994.

1. The indicators of human distress included in the UNDP Report are murders, suicides, rapes, drug crimes, prisoners, pollution and unemployment. I have not incorporated the last item into table 1., but that does not affect my argument.
2. The term 'nation-state' assumes that there is coterminality between state and nation. However, in the vast majority of the cases this is not true and hence it may be better to use the term polity.
3. It may be noted that the present analysis applies the adjective 'European' not only to geographical Europe but also to those regions which have been colonized and appropriated by them, although, of course the reference is confined to the developed ones.
4. It is necessary to recognize the existence of four different types of societies—stratified, heterogeneous, hierarchical and plural. All societies are stratified on the basis of age, gender and class. But if a society's population is drawn from the same race, religion and/or linguistic group, it could be said to be homogeneous. Conversely, multiracial, multi-national, multi-religious and poly-ethnic polities may be referred to as heterogeneous societies. In this type of society, there is a possibility of inequality becoming a formal feature based on race (e.g., South Africa, until recently) or caste (e.g., India, before 1947), which also renders them hierarchical societies. That is, heterogeneous societies with institutionalized inequality are hierarchical. But a heterogeneous society need not be hierarchical as racially and/or culturally diverse groups in the polity may have socio-economic equality.

   In the cases of stratified, heterogeneous and hierarchical societies, however, the internality of the constituting elements are not questioned. Thus, the American 'Negro', the Indian 'untouchable' and the Greek 'slave' were all accepted as essential and useful internal elements although equality was not granted to them. In contrast, the internality of one or another segment in a plural society is questioned, that is, a plural society is polarized between insiders and outsiders. Sometimes, the insiders may be marginalized (e.g., the First Nations in the New World) and the outsiders became dominant and sometimes the outsiders may be marginalized and deprived of their rights (e.g., Indians in Fiji, or guest workers in Western Europe). It is of signal importance to note that the first three types of societies are not either or

but additive types. That is, culturally diverse societies are also stratified. Hierarchical societies are stratified and heterogeneous. But plural societies are stratified and heterogeneous although they may or may not be hierarchical. However, they have one or more segments whose internality to the polity is questioned.

5. However, it may be noted here that while globalization facilitates the untrammelled flow of capital from the developed to the less developed world, but developed countries try to prevent the flow of labour from the underdeveloped countries thereby blocking globalization.
6. The discipline of social/cultural anthropology conceived as and devoted to the study of other societies was geared to civilize the 'primitive' and 'backward' societies and to facilitate colonial administration and christianization. While the study of other societies did eventually contribute to social theory, its initial aim was different.
7. This is not to deny the fact that a stratified society may get divided into two or more sovereign states based on secular ideology (e.g. Germany, Korea). However, the natural affinity between the populations of these states will be maintained in spite of the artificial vivisection of the society.

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ON REALITY: ITS PERCEPTION AND CONSTRUCTION

Satish Saberwal

> It does not need a dramatic disaster to change the intellectual outlook of a generation. It only needs a slight change of direction, the end of expansion, the drying up of sources of information, a series of small setbacks, a persistent sense that nothing is going well.
>
> —R. W. Southern

I
INTRODUCTION

BACK in the mid-1970s I toyed with the ambition of writing a critique of Professor Ramkrishna Mukherjee's sociological work. To this end, I read through a large part of his corpus of works—and made extensive notes on it. What struck me then was his abiding interest in characterizing 'reality', an interest which is echoed in his later work, *Systemic Sociology* (1993). While I could not carry that project to a conclusion, the question of how to characterize reality has continued to nag me.[1]

Interpretations of reality may exist, of course, at several levels, ranging from a focus on epochs and civilizations to one on the passing moment. Furthermore, interpreting and understanding my own ongoing experience, academic and personal, has been a long-term preoccupation with me.[2] I do this by: (a) bringing whatever little I know of the social sciences (and other fields) to bear upon my ongoing observations; (b) isolating what appear to be the key, operative processes in the field under observation, be these biological, psychic, social, political, or other;

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and (c) placing these operative processes in relation to the long-term historical context which gave rise to them.

Insofar as these operative processes, and their historical origins, are located accurately, one may claim to have recognized a little bit of 'reality'.[3] One perceives more of its aspects, however, as this exploration stretches over diverse processes and historical contexts. These aspects are so varied that one has to lift one's focus to a more abstract level: to search for distinctions and conceptions which would enable us to talk intelligibly about the nature of reality in the round.

I should say that these notes began as an anthropologist's attempt to keep his own work in order. Philosophers handle the same terms very differently, stressing, on one side, the analytic adequacy of the distinctions made and, on the other, their long lineages in the history of ideas.

A category as encompassing as 'reality' has to have many dimensions, and a preliminary orientation to them is necessary (Section II). Our initial perception of any phenomenon is necessarily subjective, often idiosyncratic, and prone to error; yet how we perceive it, what meaning we read into it, how we define it—on that basis alone can we act in relation to the phenomenon (Section III). The idiosyncrasy, the subjective character, of our perception has to be transcended if cooperative activity is to become possible: that is to say, 'intersubjective agreement' is a precondition for the orderly flow of everyday social existence (Section IV). The reach of such agreement may be broadened further yet.

This possibility of inter-subjective agreement is carried further in scholarship and, especially, in scientific activity. This possibility rests on two bases: (1) a striving in the scientific community for intersubjective agreement spanning the whole of the concerned community of today and tomorrow—regardless of differences of culture, nationality, gender, or whatever; and (2) a search for shared methods, criteria, standards, and forms of interpretation which can underpin such allegiance to a common ethic across space and time (Section V). Scholarship and science may be seen as specialized activities which may enable one to perceive reality in a more 'objective' manner.

Much of the expansive vigour of the West, in recent centuries, has emerged from secular, long term improvements in its devices for

perceiving reality; and this possibility germinated in Europe's historical experience, during and after the Middle Ages (Section VI).[4]

A sociologist may legitimately evade the question: 'How are perceptions formed?'–which properly belongs to psychology. The methods of individual and social psychology are experimental; their foci rest on the elementary processes which go into the formation of perceptions concerning simple objects, other persons, and the like. Social psychologists have been straining towards comprehending more complex objects of perception, however, and have linked up with anthropologists in considering the implications of cultural difference for perception (Tajfel 1969 has reviewed the field).[5]

II
DIMENSIONS OF REALITY

There are numerous dimensions along which the nature, and the perception, of reality can vary. I shall consider three:

1. The distinction between the physical and the cultural. A physical or biological phenomenon, say death, may carry a variety of meanings in different cultures. Each culture recognizes the meaning–the reality–of death in a distinctive way, though the underlying physical phenomenon is identical.
2. The twin issues of *unit size* or scale, which concerns the phenomenal level, and that of *detail*, which concerns our manner of perceiving a phenomenon. These two issues may be considered together.
3. The question of *variability* in phenomena. This is linked with the level of *abstraction* at which we conceptualize a phenomenon.

Physical/Cultural

To start with one kind of distinction, my father's death is a kind of reality; and if this leaves me polluted for a period, that pollution too is real. In one case, however, the reality is physical; in the other, it is cultural. *Physical reality* is culture-free; fathers and others die in every society. *Cultural reality* refers to the terms of perception which are culturally specific.[6] Pollution at death of close kin is observed only in

some societies, though the end of a life has implications serious enough that every society needs to take notice, and to have a more or less patterned, shared form for responding to the occasion.

Many of the conceptions in the cultural realm take their cue from physical realities; but a conception formed in any one culture gets much of its form and content in the presuppositions generally prevalent in that culture: the idea of pollution used to pervade a great deal more than just death in my culture. That is to say, apparently identical physical reality may carry vastly different meanings in different cultural contexts: to continue with our example of death, it may be an occasion for quiet mourning in one culture, for intense prayer in another, and for loud lamentation in yet another. In the social sciences, recognition of such diversity is elementary.

Unit Size or Scale

The difference of size or scale between the rock outside my house and a great mountain is obvious enough. Obvious, too, is the difference of scale between a person and a civilization. We should notice, however, that a qualitative change has been taking place in the world around us. In the social realm, it used to be that most lives were confined within spaces which could be traversed in a day's walk. In recent centuries, however, we have witnessed a manifold expansion of the scales of possible social activities and of possible social influences. We owe this dramatic expansion of possible lifespace to such technology as the railways and the internet computer network and to such institutions as a general election, a great newspaper, and a stock exchange.

To capture the outcome of these tendencies, it is common to use terms like the 'global village'. There is irony to such terms. A scarcely literate traveller may indeed be borne across continents swiftly; yet (s)he may command the skills of the village only, being clueless at the global level.

The foregoing refers to differences in scales of phenomenal reality; but any phenomenon may be observed and represented on different scales, as with the scale of a map, taking in corresponding levels of detail. Illustratively, the edge of a blade, used for shaving, has one kind of image to the naked eye; when examined under a powerful microscope the image is on a larger scale, it is much more detailed. The different

images–and levels of detail–refer to the same reality, and there are routines to observe in moving from one level to another. If you are doing research on blades, you would have learned how to translate what you observe under the microscope into its likely feel against the face while shaving.

The point to remember is that the logic operative at one level of detail may not be the same as would apply at a different level. If one moves from one to another carelessly, the consequences may be as incongruous as those of mistaking a town map for a continental one, or historical time for geological time.[7]

Variability/Abstraction/Durability

Phenomena observable in life are immensely variable. What we observe may change from one day to the next, one moment to the next: my friend's moods of elation, anger, or despair; a monsoon day changing from cloudy skies to torrential rain to bright sunshine; or the out-of-control truck hurtling towards me. A great novelist, or ethnographer, can indeed capture a palpable feel for such experienced situations: what piety is like in a great mosque; or what it felt like when disaster struck Bhopal that night. Such reportage is central to scientific activity (Runciman 1983: Ch. 4).

Scholarship commonly engages with social and other reality at another level too. It seeks the general principles and theories with which to explain observations: the biochemical and psychological bases of changing moods; the general principles of cloud formation, movement, and precipitation; the cultural bases of religious belief; and so on. Such principles and theories must (necessarily) be sought at a relatively abstract level. The concern with 'reality' remains; the level of abstraction changes.

Scientific activity routinely begins with observable phenomena and tries to climb a *ladder of abstraction.*[8] This has two consequences: (1) the *variability* gets abstracted away at successive rungs; and (2) the abstract formulations–general principles, theories–conceive of phenomena at relatively invariant levels. These abstract theories and principles may explain such situations in a variety of times and places.

Let us look at the different rungs of the ladder of abstraction. We have noted the ground level of observations, with their high variability,

already. At some distance from this level is another order of reality which (1) is human-made, and therefore subject to change, and (2) is part of a shared social tradition, set into relatively 'firm moulds–'institutionalized'–and therefore is subject to a relatively slow pace of change. A higher level of abstraction is also available in the social realm. At this level lie the recognitions that: (a) every language has patterning in multiple layers (at the levels of sounds employed, *phonemes*; minimal units of meaning, *morphemes*, *lexemes*, etc.); (b) one's cultural resources fashion, very largely, one's perceptions and one's interpretations of complex experience; (c) the dreams, myths, and religious beliefs generated in a society are projective systems explicable with reference to workaday personal and collective experiences in that society; and so forth.

Beyond this is the level of timeless realities which, once recognized, have a persistence amidst the enveloping flux: for example, the Periodic Table of Elements, or Newton's Laws of Motion. Now three centuries old, these latter, though subsumed in more complex formulations, remain valid within specified conditions.

Note that, as we move up the level of abstraction, and attain formulations with higher levels of invariance, we get formulations which have greater *durability*. The validity of the basic laws of physics stretches beyond the emergence of human beings on the evolutionary scene. That is why an astrophysicist can lean on them to study distant galaxies confidently.

Concerning these several rungs of reality, I wish to make two points, namely, that each rung has its own characteristic texture, and that appraising each requires techniques whose shaping has historically been a matter of much trial and error historically.

The foregoing hints at the great variety of levels of phenomenal reality, and the diverse modes of observing and conceptualizing that reality which are available to us. It is appropriate, therefore, to take due care in picking one's terms when speaking of 'reality'.

Before proceeding further, I wish to narrate a set of events in and around the campus of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) during the widespread anti-Sikh riots in Delhi in November 1984. This account will anchor some of the later discussion.

III
DEFINING A SITUATION: AN ACCOUNT OF EVENTS IN NOVEMBER 1984

On the last day of October, Indira Gandhi had been assassinated. The next day, November 1, a busload of outsiders tried, unsuccessfully, to enter the JNU campus, presumably in search of Sikhs, and there were rumours of imminent attacks. For several days following, therefore, the campus was astir, with round-the-clock vigil to meet any possible attack from outside.

Much of this concern turned on an urbanized 'village' which shares a border road with the campus. One night, I think on November 3, a good deal of shouting was heard from the village side of the road, and hundreds of men and women assembled on the JNU side at the boundary wall, looking out on the village. Apprehension of an attack from the village was acute. In fact nothing happened.

The next morning, a colleague and I thought of going to the village to enquire why there had been such a racket the previous night. Our first contact was a JNU staff member who lives in the village and who led us to others. Village elders, whom we had no reason to doubt, insisted that they had no hostile intent towards the university. The noise, they explained, had come from villagers because they had feared an attack by Sikhs. Some of these fears, admittedly, rested on nothing more substantial than the sound of crackers which pranksters had saved over from the Diwali festival. Shouting had been part of *their* defensive preparation *vis-a-vis* the Sikhs. Note how this fear of the Sikhs was part of at least some villagers' sense of reality even though no Sikh may have been in a position to attack the village. Subsequently, as the residents of the campus proceeded to formulate their own construct of reality, the sounds from the village were interpreted as being hostile.

A fair number of residents in the village finds lower level employment in the university, and sometimes persons working or studying in the university rent accommodation in the village. Many villagers collect wood and use pasturage in the campus routinely, and occasionally a student locates a minor field study in the village. Yet significant contacts, and communication, between the university and the village opposite have been scant. That is why, in November 1984,

campus residents grossly misinterpreted the sounds coming from the village.

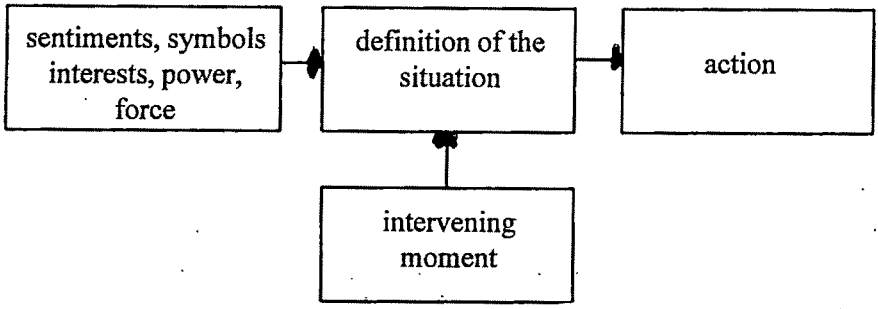
Defining a Situation

'Defining the situation' is a phrase sociologists often use (e.g. Merton 1948, following W. I. Thomas). To define a situation is to interpret that situation, to read a particular meaning into it, at a given time.[9] The campus defined the situation on the premise of the villagers' hostile intent, villagers on that of the Sikhs' hostile intent. Both these notions of reality—the villagers' and the campus's—were erroneous. Both suffered an acute sense of threat and insecurity when, on independent evidence, or, 'in reality', there was no threat 'out there'. Yet until such error is recognized, the only available description of reality—on which we can base our intentions and actions—is the one given to us by our immediate perception and judgement, howsoever faulty these may be. These perceptions and judgements go into shaping a certain mental state which influences what we choose to do.

The foregoing implies that, in defining a situation, we may have a certain choice, a certain room for manoeuvre. To take an instance from modern Indian history, Mohamed Ali could be a spokesman for 'Muslim interests' almost exclusively, before his incarceration during World War I, and again after Khilafat had collapsed. During the Khilafat phase, however, he was, along with Gandhi and others, a full blooded Indian nationalist (Hasan 1979). Again, between 1937 and 1946, a good many Muslims in the subcontinent changed their definition of their political situation: they voted for the Muslim League and, implicitly, for the creation of Pakistan. Politically, the mid-40s were marked—as many periods are marked—by multiple, competing definitions of the situation in India: say those associated with the Congress, the Muslim League, R. S. S., the Princes, the regional parties, the Raj, and so on. Now, if one definition of the situation comes to prevail over the other(s), it is because of the variety of elements which happen to buttress that way of looking at things (fig. 1).

What are the elements that can go into one's defining a situation in a particular way? Anything that counts in having you believe one thing rather than another: fig. 1 lists sentiments, symbols, interests, power, and force.[10] Furthermore, members of a group—a sect, a faction, a country at

Fig. 1: *Definition of a Situation*



war–may persuade each other of the absolute truth of even their most arbitrary notions.[11]

There are two things to remember here:

1. In analysing an episode or a larger happening, when we say that X defined the situation as one of threat or opportunity or cordiality, giving it a particular meaning, we are recognizing an "intervening moment" in our analysis: it specifies the mental state which later yielded a particular course of action.
2. When we say that an event, a social outcome, resulted from a certain definition of the situation, this can only be a preliminary step in the analytic task. It remains then to ask: What produced that mental state? Why did that definition came to prevail over the alternative(s)?

Reality Testing

Insofar as my definition of a situation–physical or social–is consistent with 'what it really is like', this improves my capacity to 'deal' with it, that is, my capacity to anticipate the course it is likely to take, in order to avail of an opportunity, forestall a threat, or whatever. *Reality*, we may say, *is that which we have to take into account lest, it surprise us with its consequences*. Hence the importance of reality testing: of checking out my notion of what a particular slice of reality is like.

I may suspect that a crowd intends to attack me, when in fact its members are only teasing me. I could check out my suspicion by making discreet enquiries, and observations, to see whether their intention is

indeed hostile. In perceiving reality, however, we may err in two directions. On one side, we may assume that something exists when evidence from other sources would suggest that it does not, as in the instance just noted. The opposite error also is possible: we assume that something does not exist when information from additional sources might suggest that it does. Surrounded by a crowd, I may be clueless about an undercurrent of antagonism, which may have grown without my being sensitive to it.[12]

A long term advantage lies in defining reality in ways that take account of evidence from the widest variety of sources feasible. This includes a consideration of how *others* define the various situations. This latter is a cultivated skill; it is a matter of learning *to face up to reality as it is.*

VI
PERCEPTION AND CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

Perception

The reality I perceive may be social, as in my perception of my neighbour's intentions, or it may be physical, as in my perception of the imminence of monsoon rain. My perception of any particular phenomenon may be more or less accurate, depending upon my procedures; and these may be naive, resting on the everyday categories and routines of my society, or these may be mediated, possibly, by my understanding of the principles of psychology, physics, and the like.

Perception, in the first instance, is necessarily personal, subjective. It is *naive*, in the sense that its own premises are not ordinarily subjected to critical appraisal. Yet, in a functioning society, everyday social practice rests crucially on agreement between different persons, on an *inter-subjective agreement*, between participants in an activity, over what the phenomena at issue really are; such agreement defines the situation collectively. Such inter-subjective agreement is necessary even though its premises would not ordinarily be examined critically; indeed, the participants would be aware of the *possibility* of such examination only rarely.

How I perceive reality becomes the basis for my actions and, therefore, goes into renewing and reconstituting–into constructing–the

reality that you may perceive, and vice versa. We construct a large part of the reality which becomes an object for others to cope with–and to interpret. Perception and construction are, thus, successive moments in the social dialectic.

This inter-subjective agreement rests commonly on the cultural assumptions which underlie the particular practice. If everyone in my community agrees that my father's death has indeed polluted me, this agreement arises from accepting the whole Brahminical ideology of purity and pollution. This has implications:

1. Defining a situation one way rather than another makes a difference. My state of pollution, following my father's death, imposes a range of obligations on me which would not apply in a society which does not recognize such a state.
2. Inter-subjective agreement, here, is culturally specific; an ordinary Kenyan or a Dane would not find it easy to concur in this belief.

It is possible to push the search for agreement between observers–inter-subjective agreement–beyond the limits of a specific culture; indeed such a drive underlies a great deal of science and scholarship. In Section V I will return to these issues.

Construction

Although the particular ways of constructing–and transmitting–social reality are necessarily a social process, the process can scarcely proceed except through *particular persons*. We have to recognize two levels. First, we construct our image of reality with such materials as our perceptions make available to us: I propose to call these our *constructs* of reality. Social reality exists, that is to say, in the form of a multitude of *personal* constructs of that reality–even though the requisite materials may be drawn from a shared cultural storehouse. To recall the incidents of November 1984, the villagers' perceptions led them to particular constructs of reality and then to certain actions; this latter provided the stimuli with which residents of the university campus constructed their image of reality, the stimuli around which the campus defined the situation at its perimeter. We shall return to the personal constructs of reality below.

Second, there is the socially constructed reality. Whatever the physical universe is itself like, a large part of the reality around us is constituted through human intentions, designs, and efforts: think of the telephone system; of the complex of doctors, drugs, chemists, and hospitals; of the universities; of the interlinked religious beliefs, practices, shrines, institutions; and so forth. What is constituted may be physical, or it may be a body of ideas.

These are man-made realities which we make, remake, and sometimes modify as we go on our daily rounds. We make them not individually but collectively, in the course of our interactions; we make them not instantly but as part of a tradition or traditions which, in turn, we make, remake, and sometimes modify. What (reality) you perceive or experience is commonly what someone else has put together. For something like my experience of a musical tradition, that putting together may, of course, have been a long process, a long time ago, becoming available as part of my growing up.

These constructed structures of reality emerge in historical processes; and these processes may be swift, as in a revolution, or slow, as in the shaping of a language. These structures of reality persist through patterned, institutionalized interactions and relationships–whose study lies at the heart of sociology, our discipline.

Embodied in institutions and in patterned forms of conduct, such realities make demands which are no less inexorable than the realities of nature: a monsoon shower and an income tax assessment can seem equally arbitrary and equally inescapable. These constructed structures of reality –traffic lights, the surgeon's orders, the pollution from someone's touch–can have a coercive potential that Newton's Laws of Motion and the like may not always have.[13] We flout them at our own risk.

Any consideration of the 'social construction of reality' reminds us of the terms of the dialectic which Berger and Luckmann (1966: 79) summed up so pithily: 'Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product' (i.e., society makes man). I have noted the man-made character of social arrangements and institutions; and also the presence and the availability of these social arrangements as an external reality. These are available both to constrain us and to encourage and inspire us on occasion. To complete the

dialectic needs the third element too: *society makes man*. That is to say, I would be like a feral child–a human child raised by a wolf mother–if I lacked the social matrices, and the cultural resources and traditions, to which I have had access, into which I have been inducted. Socialization with reference to the ongoing arrangements, routines, and institutions enables the continuation of particular ways of constructing reality.

This socialization or, if you prefer, apprenticeship in particular ways of constructing reality, can achieve varying measures of success at best. The inadequacies of socialization, for some of which we may be thankful, may be traced to a variety of factors: there are intrinsic differences between *persons*; the social structure carries various alternatives, and these may be learned idiosyncratically; historical *circumstances* change, and what worked well for parents may work badly for children; and so forth.

Amidst all the variability, however, the *personal* construct of reality, which we mentioned earlier, does draw upon a received repertoire of meanings, of ideas concerning what that reality is or ought to be, of modes of visualizing the future, and so forth. One draws on these to construct a personal, individual, in some ways unique and idiosyncratic sense of the world around oneself.

In order to cope with our life situations, we need to be able to give them meanings–definitions of situations–with reference to which we may act. These meanings are strengthened if others, whose opinions we value and whose judgments we respect, confirm them in word and deed.

It is a mark of situations of major 'social change' that such received, entrenched social forms decline during such periods. That is to say, the shared (implicit) commitment to such a form declines, and so does its quality of evoking certain kinds of behaviour in predictable ways. The social form, you might say, has 'ceased to be relevant'.

Even as the received social forms decline, however, some individuals may have the reputation of choosing well–of exercising good judgment–in situations of considerable uncertainty.[14] If such persons emerge as 'stable anchors', (social psychologist Muzafer Sherif's phrase, quoted in Tajfel 1969: 357), in relation to whom others learn to orient their own conduct, the social process may continue in relatively stable ways. Particular actors may then continue to interpret–to make sense of–their own biographies satisfactorily.

It must be remembered, however, that the adequacy of these processes in a society can never be taken for granted. Whether these work, and how well these work, would depend on the adequacy of the society's educational system, that is, on how much care it routinely takes to equip its next generation to cope with the changing realities of existence.

V
SCIENCE, INTERSUBJECTIVE AGREEMENT, AND ERROR

We move now to a series of issues bearing directly on scientific activity. I begin with some observations on the ethos of science: its commitment to transparency and to critical, recursive appraisals of its own activities lay the ground for intersubjective agreement–transcending particular localities and cultures. Searching for shared methods, criteria, standards, and interpretative forms is central to the scientific enterprise; and judgments of 'error'–in science or in everyday life–depend on the availability of reliable standards, independently of the particular situation at issue.

Intersubjective Agreement

It is imperative for scholars and scientists that, as part of their professional activity

- they be willing to consider alternative formulations justly, and
- they routinely scrutinize, critically, the validity and adequacy of their own assumptions: in terms of internal consistency, in the light of empirical evidence and in comparison with alternative formulations; it is imperative for them, that is, to be *recursive* in relation to their own work.

The better a scientist is able to objectively analyse his/her own ideas in relation to the ideas and results of other scientists, the better is this scientist likely to be.[15] Such recursive appraisal–and considering of alternatives–cannot ever stop in sound scholarship; and therefore formulations in the social (and other) sciences may over time become

less and less naive. Importantly, however, these formulations can never shed this element of naivety altogether[16].

For scholarship, this recursive appraisal–and considering of alternatives–has a crucial consequence: professional scientists from varied institutional, religious, and national backgrounds are commonly able to agree on what is being observed, and on how to interpret it; hence the possibility of wide-ranging *inter-subjective agreement.*[17] Indeed, scientific formulations seek, ideally, to be free from any particular cultural context, except that of science.[18] The Periodic Table of Elements, for example, emerged through the labours of physicists and chemists in many countries over several generations. Striving to achieve inter-subjective agreement, across societies and over long periods of time, may then be one road to 'objectivity' (Pugh 1983: 47).

A body of knowledge like the Periodic Table of Elements may reasonably lay claim for its universal acceptance–and validity. We shall revert to this rather extraordinary cultural achievement: this collective ability to maintain wide-ranging inter-subjective agreement, in shifting fields of knowledge, many of which are continually subject to thoroughgoing revision and reformulation.

It should be noted that vigorous disputation, over issues large and small, is part of the process. The point bears restating: wide-ranging agreement in the sciences, and in academia generally, is *not* despite the disputation. The agreements are a *consequence* of the disputation; and the orderly, purposive conduct of this disputation reinforces the participants' confidence in, and commitment to, the culture of science.

Quantification

At the heart of the scientific endeavour lies a search for generally applicable methods, criteria, standards, and interpretative forms. I wish to make two comments here:

1. This search for generally applicable methods, standards, and the like often seeks forms which can be repeated reliably; and the search commonly looks for aspects which can be quantified–and therefore measured by different scholars independently.

   A caveat is necessary, however. It cannot be the case that whatever can be quantified is significant. Quantification cannot

confer significance; at best it can confer precision. If it should become possible, however, to quantify what is judged, independently, to be significant, it would facilitate inter-subjective agreement.

2. The shared search for alternative methods and standards, and the shared, higher order methods and standards for evaluating them. These are essential, and make it possible for the scholarly community to be able to transcend the limitations of particular localities and cultures (although in my conclusion I have put a caveat). For the scientific community, these serve as 'levers of transcendence' (Schwartz 1985: 5 uses the phrase similarly).

Error in Everyday Life

The importance of such standards and criteria may be seen by reference to events in everyday life. My brother's extraordinary behaviour may persuade me that he has come to be possessed by a malignant spirit. If this belief is reasonable in the logic prevailing in the society in which I live, you may not be able to accuse me of error within that cultural logic. Indeed that 'possession' would be seen to be 'real' if you consider the statements made by my brother or, rather, by the identity claimed by the voice speaking through him.[19]

My belief in this case can be said to be an error only if a relatively context-free psychological criterion, or form of interpretation, concerning my brother's behaviour is ready at hand. Such a standard may not be available to me, or to you. Only *where a valid standard is available can my perception* of that slice of reality be judged to be false or illusory.

Error in Science

When scholars in the social (and other) sciences analyse, and make pronouncements regarding, the nature of social (and other) reality, and others take them seriously, these pronouncements contribute to *defining* that reality. It is important to recognize that scholars and scientists make errors too. The ordinary risks of scholarship may be aggravated by partisan political backing—or by the impact of nationalist, religious, racist, or other prejudice. Such influence may trap a scholar into believing that (s)he need not consider alternative formulations justly; or

one may merely fail in practice to do so. Such activity slides beyond the pale of scholarship proper, regardless of the eminence of the persons involved.

Insofar as such scholars abandon their recursive practice–whether or not done consciously–their sterility grows with time. Backed by the Communist party, the Lysenko clique could impose its homespun notions on plant breeding techniques on the Soviet Union for a whole generation! Lysenko was finally junked because of the higher order standards that had led elsewhere to the discovery of the genetic bases of mutation in plants (Joravsky 1970). Academic sterility may, of course, have other antecedents too.

Ambition in Science

We may note that the methods of science give us a hold on only limited segments of reality at any time. At any given moment, the sciences tend to be unambitious–if you compare them with the knowledge-claims of a *tantrik* or a godman. Yet, the sciences' commitment to openness and transparency, to testability and a shared sense of method, gives their findings an unparalleled cumulativeness. Consequently, the sciences can be very ambitious over the long term. The process of securing methods, criteria, standards, and interpretative forms that transcend particular laboratories and specific cultural contexts is a key driving mechanism for the long-term achievements of the sciences; and it provides the basis for inter-subjective agreement over widening cognitive fields.

Europe's Experience

One scarcely need say that the West has achieved secular, long term improvements in its devices, both material and mental, for perceiving reality. I wish to ask, briefly, (1) wherein these improvements lay, and (2) how the West came to take this tack during the medieval period.[20]

The Improvements

What is the nature of the improvements in these means for perceiving reality? Commonly these bring to us *pictures of reality* at levels that are inaccessible when using only the means with which nature has endowed us. Telescopes, ultrasonic scanners, and the robots used for locating fragments of Kanishka in the depths of the Atlantic–all illustrate these

devices. In the social sciences one thinks of the rise of anthropological and psychoanalytic skills for plumbing the depths of the unfamiliar.

Beyond particular techniques and instruments, there is the use of complex processes and routines, in and out of laboratories, for enlarging, and making more reliable, our maps of reality which collectively constitute the sciences of our time. Among these maps of reality are those drawn in the social sciences, whether you consider interpretations of long-term civilizational experience, say by Michael Mann, or theoretical statements, say by Berger and Luckmann.

The History

Europe's skill in facing up to reality-as-it-is began to get sharper in early second millennium. Accelerated by the experience of the Crusades between the late 11th and the mid-13th centuries, sailings of growing reach came gradually to connect the West Asian ports–in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean–with North European ports in the Baltic. Associated with this growth in shipping and commerce, one can identify a more general skill– that of the accurate recognition of external reality, social as well as physical. Accuracy in recognizing external reality facilitated wider agreement on the characteristics of that reality. There was also a gradual recognition, furthermore, that action in terms of these *accurate,* agreed characteristics had a better chance of attaining its goal and avoiding mishap. The most dramatic expression of this orientation to reality was to be seen, of course, in Europe's mastery of the oceans and in its ability, 1492 onwards, to penetrate every continent and island on this earth. This orientation to reality included a growing capacity to organize information about that reality into useable form, and using it to advantage.

Thus, provisions were made for:

- sailing charts for jagged coastlines, and directions for sailing the oceans (Scammell 1981: 206-8);
- growing size of ships (up to 2000 tons by the mid-15th century, Ibid.: 194) and an increased variety of sails for ships;
- *watermills and windmills,* harnessing inanimate energy (Thrupp 1972: 232) White 1972: 156)
- *papermills,* from 1276 onwards, which manufactured paper for

writing on at a price half that of parchment, quickening thereby manuscript production, the book trade, and consequent activity (Murray 1978: 301);
- *reading glasses,* invented in Venice in the 1290s (Ibid.: 302), often doubling a person's years of active reading;
- *clocks,* in the 14th century, facilitating the organizing of one's own time, and co-ordinating with others (Le Goff 1972: 86); White 1972: 160); and so forth.[21]

Medieval Europe showed its sensitivity towards *social* reality too. In the mid-13th century, the Mongols were knocking at the doors of Europe from the East. First the Pope, Innocent IV, and then the king of France, Louis IX, sent emissaries–Franciscan monks–to the court of the great Khan of the Mongols in Karakorum to ascertain what kind of society they had, and what their intentions were towards the Muslims, the Christians, and so forth (Southern 1962: 44-51). (In contrast, during the 17th and 18th centuries, our ancestors made scant effort to judge what the long-term intentions of Europeans in India could be.)

The happenings in Europe may be seen as practical skills: sailing, harnessing inanimate energy, making paper and reading glasses and clocks, diplomacy, and so on. Alongside, there was also the level of ideas: ideas about the nature of the world, and how it works. Europeans in the Middle Ages brought the greatest seriousness to writing and arguing at this second level. By the early 14th century, in the universities, especially Oxford, and outside them, the premises being advanced and the issues being discussed were such that one may see in them intimations of the direction which led to men like Copernicus and Newton in later centuries. These complex matters I can broach here only in unseemly brevity, referring to three issues:

- the *context* in which, during the 12th and 13th centuries, the stock of ideas in Europe took a quantal leap;
- the *epistemic break* between the Scholastics (such as *Thomas Aquinas, c1225-74),* whose scholarship leaned heavily on ancient authorities, such as Aristotles, in its search for truth, and a more empirically oriented scholarship (such as that of William of Ockham *c.*1286–*c.*1348), which privileged experience as the

source from which to learn about the world we live in; and the changing *Societal Conditions* wherein this empirical turn in medieval European thought could begin.

A. *The context:* Late medieval European intellectual history features a signal event of unmatched significance. In its reduced circumstances following the subsidence of Rome, Europe had abandoned knowledge of the Greek language, and thereby lost access to the learning of ancient Greece. As part of the economic expansiveness of the 11th and 12th centuries, the West's contacts with the Arabs in Spain and elsewhere grew. The Arab philosophers' thought was stimulating enough; but this thought, and the Arabs' libraries, directed attention to the forgotten treasures of Greek thought. Europeans moved swiftly–from the 12th centuries onwards–to translate this massive body of re-discovered Greek texts into Latin, and to assimilate it into their thinking and their university curricula. The Greek corpus, and especially Aristotle, was the principal impetus, but Europeans were taking in the Arab masters' thought too. Further afield, the widening horizon of their experience was symbolized by Marco Polo's years in, and writings on, China.

B. *The Epistemic Break:* The history of ideas during these tumultous centuries is intricate, immensely involuted;[22] out of that, I have space to make just one point. Different scholars dealt with a variety of issues, of course; but a dominant concern of European scholarship, during the 13th century, came to be to try to provide rational bases for key elements of faith: the nature of God and His working; His effect on man, the soul, will, intelligence and truth; the possibility of knowledge, and so forth. The issues considered, and the arguments advanced, rested on hypothetical assumptions and distinctions. For this project, the Aristotelian apparatus of logic, and of detecting error in argument, as well as his particular conceptions were seen to be an important resource, especially at the University of Paris.

The corpus of fresh writing grew, yet the gain in understanding was less than commensurate. On the contrary, numerous scholars were committed to the use of *reason* alone; and its play, unconstrained by doctrinal orthodoxy, could lead in directions which seemed perilously subversive of faith. So, there was a good deal of conflict. A way out of the impasse had already been shaping at Oxford, led by Robert

Grosseteste, since the early 13th century. A distinction emerged between two kinds of knowledge: that concerning God, and that concerning experience. Truth about God is revealed; truth about the world of experience is an empirical matter, to be ascertained through observation and experiment. Positing this autonomy of empirical experience, a body of scholarship in the 13th and early 14th centuries ranged over fields which included mathematics, motion, optics, magnetism, astronomy, and linguistics. This new scholarship was distinctive in its empiricism, in recognizing the importance of *experience* for learning about the world we live in.

Compared with *a priori* knowledge, based purely on reason and speculation, that in the empirical mode has one advantage: its proponent can present his evidence publicly; and different observers may agree on the evidence of their senses the more easily. The empirical mode arose in a process internal to the course of medieval scholarship; but we may also refer to the societal conditions which proved hospitable to it. I mention two such conditions: first, the weakening grip of the Church; and second, the growing differentiation of society.

C. *The Societal Conditions*: By the 14th century, the Church was already in some difficulties: fleeing Rome in 1309, the Pope settled in Avignon in southern France, and stayed until 1377: a dependent on the king of France. Under these conditions, William of Ockham, for instance, could defy the Church, finding shelter with a secular authority in 1328 and settling in Munich (Leff 1958: 280). The Church could do little to suppress the alternative perspectives being canvassed. The ideological differentiation went with the continuing differentiation of society, with a growing specialization, or differentiation, of institutions. I have reviewed the historic trajectory of this institutional differentiation in medieval Europe elsewhere (Saberwal 1991a, worked into 1995).

There was the Church itself, long the dominant institution. It had given rise to a wide variety of monasteries and other institutions which were substantially autonomous in relation to ecclesiastical authority. A 13th century university was a centre of learning; it brought teachers of law, medicine, theology, and philosophy together in one institution,[23] which would often be assertive of its own autonomy. The kingships had their consultative assemblies, their courts of justice, and their growing bureaucracies. The Italian cities' governmental arrangements rested on

explicit, written, if frequently contested constitutions. With growing commerce, there was the growing strength of merchants, bankers, and artisanal guilds: interdependent categories, each of which, nevertheless, carried space for autonomous activity.

It is necessary to recognize the exceptional quality of these institutional realms. Though tending towards *autonomy,* these institutions were far from being *insulated* against each other socially. There was a good deal of seepage–of ideas and of people–across them, as through the Church, the monasteries, and the universities. We have here a differentiation of institutions, functioning autonomously, along with substantial mobility across them. Such a situation would have consequences.

On one side, this autonomy and differentiation provided institutional space for arguing out distinctive viewpoints, often subverting orthodoxies, despite recurring ecclesiastical efforts at stamping out ideas believed to undermine faith. On the other side, the frequent mobility across the institutions generated a pressure to search for a shared approach to things, for a shared sense of method, a shared worldview, one that a person could carry even in transiting from one institutional realm to another.[24] It would be a shared, generalized view, one that would tend to transcend the specificities of worldviews associated with particular occupations or institutions. 'A crucial Western property seems to be the interpenetration, both organizationally and ideologically, of the same general system wide culture', notes the sociologist John Meyer (1989: 407).

VII
CONCLUSION

This essay has sought to explore a few aspects of the infinitely complex domain of reality. Our *perception* of reality is mediated by such material means as our eyes or telescopes, some means fabricated by nature, others by us. Furthermore, for interpreting–that is, for seeing the *meanings* of–our perceptions, we need devices of another kind. The significance of our observations through the telescope, which may be portentous for an astronomer or an astrophysicist, would be lost to the untrained eye. Alongside material means, then, we need cultural resources for

interpreting our perceptions. Their overall quality depends on the quality of both our material means, our eyes or our telescopes, and of relevant cultural resources, whether folk beliefs or high flown theory.

An important distinction about 'truth' is this: the validity of a proposition limited to a specific cultural context, or is it general, culture-free? The striving for a culture-free level of validity is central to the scientific enterprise; and such an aspiration can be sustained only through concentration on questions of method, which underpin replicable observations, and therefore the possibility of an expanding body of shared interpretations. Where the calculus of political advantage, or collective prejudice, leads to the flouting of this ethos, science gives way to chicanery. A recursive skepticism is central to this ethos, and it confers on the scientific enterprise the qualities of asymptotic approximation to truth. The possibility of inter-subjective agreement in scientific work, furthermore, underlies the potential for an unrivalled cumulativeness in science over the long term.

A caveat, in conclusion, concerning my insistence on the culture-free status of the scientific enterprise. For clear historical reasons, virtually all scientific knowledge, even that generated within India, comes to us in obviously Western cultural garb. The codes and notations it employs have drawn upon, and contributed to, everyday Western practices for centuries. When presented to an Indian child–or adult–who has not had much exposure to Western cultural forms, such scientific knowledge is unmistakably alien: its forms of thought and representation would be more or less detached from the other areas of thought and representation in her or his experience.[25] As social psychologist Tajfel (1969: 379) noted, 'perceptual interpretations of notation systems are not "given"; they must be rooted in appropriate past experience. This points to difficulties that may be encountered in the introduction of systems of education using unfamiliar notation systems in new cultural contexts'. Science and scientific knowledge, then, can be 'culture free' only in principle; yet, at least potentially, these are more so than any other body knowledge or activity.

I have argued that both the perception and the construction of reality are historically created and learned skills, outcomes of *social processes*. The shaping of these skills in Europe came to be funnelled into fields which we know as science and technology. We considered the processes

propelling this course of events at some length. The waxing and waning of these skills are legitimate areas for sociological interest, though the philosophers' critique would help ensure that we not jump rails in this project.

NOTES

An initial version of this essay was presented as a UGC National Lecture in Sociology, 1985-86. Thoughtful comments from several directions enabled my virtually incoherent initial notes to shape into the present text, prepared for a *festschrift* to honour Professor Ramkrishna Mukherjee, being edited by Partha Nath Mukherji. Partha Mukherji and Gayatri Saberwal commented at length on several successive drafts. Exceptionally detailed comments came from Rajiv Lochan at Punjab University and Olaf Andersen, biophysicist at Cornell University Medical College, under whom Gayatri was a Research Associate. I benefited from the sound advice of Vijay Bharadwaj, Kunal Chakrabarti, and Mrinal Miri. Long-term grants from Indian Council of Social Science Research, for work on 'Societal designs in history', have helped this essay along.

1. Wolfgang Schluchter, the German sociologist, underlined some years ago the imperative to take 'a consistent and unified stance' towards the world (1979: 15). Mrinal Miri, the Indian philosopher, raises 'the possibility of a multiplicity of such stances' (personal communication). These two positions point towards the ambition of unified science on one side, and the importance of cultural diversity on the other. This essay will touch on cultural diversity only incidentally.
2. An account of the course I have taken, following this routine, appears in Saberwal (1985) worked into 1996: Ch.8)
3. In principle, I use the term 'reality' in a comprehensive sense, to include in its ambit the working, and the products, of imagination. To speak in these terms intelligibly, however, one would need to introduce further distinctions—a task best avoided in an essay already too abstruse.
4. Anyone who relies excessively on Foucault might think my dating anachronistic. As late as the 16th century, Foucault tells us (1970: Ch. 2), European thought remained enchanted, imagining multitudes of resemblances in the universe, without worrying much about empirical validation. This may well have been the case in certain domains. To be sure, Columbus was much given to reading signs in all manner of things (Todorov 1984). Yet, for men like Columbus and Vasco da Gama to push into uncharted oceans needed more than signs; it needed confidence in their ability to negotiate the physical and social terrains on their way.
5. Questions of 'reality' and 'perception', however defined, loomed large in the ancient Indian philosophical tradition. Indexes to the volumes of Dasgupta's *A History of Indian Philosophy* (1922-54) carry scores of references to these and related terms; and both terms appear in titles of B. K. Matilal's writings. Yet I lack the minimal orientation to this tradition, which would have been needed for me to try to bring it into this discussion even marginally.
6 Whatever is 'cultural' at one level, though, always has 'physical' aspects:

minimally, the human mind has neural bases; but the cultural may also have physical *consequences:* if a polluted person touches one who is not, it may require a bath—or lead to a fight; and so forth.

7 Some years ago I heard a lecture which drew wide-ranging parallels between the chronologies of national movements in several countries of Asia and Africa. A member of the audience insisted that the links between these countries were far older than these chronologies: Africa and Asia had once been *one continent.* The comment arose from a wholly untenable implication of continuity between a geological process and a historical one.

8. A particular episode in science may also begin with a general theory— which directs attention to certain possible phenomena—and then the experimenter tries to create conditions for observing those phenomena. This possibility arises due to a ladder of abstraction being already available.

9. Everyday use of language contributes to defining one's reality in some measure. Words, categories, serve to classify the reality—and thereby to explain it too: 'Why did the professor behave that way?' 'Because he is neurotic.' Here the word neurotic gives meaning to, defines the meaning of, an observation.
Words, categories, may *simplify* the reality which they define: a great variety of conducts and of persons may be classified as neurotic, with or without reason. Such implicit, everyday simplification, in our constructs of reality, may serve either to illuminate key elements of that reality or to hide them from our awareness. Words and categories, by themselves, are neutral to such unwitting consequences.

10. How to characterize the behaviour of one whose action follows from the manner in which society defines the situation, even though (s)he rejects the underlying beliefs? To use the case of death pollution, a son may reject the idea, yet go through the observances. In our framework, what is crucial is the mental state which leads one to act in a particular way. Whether one accepts an ideology or, even though rejecting the ideology, merely submits to social pressure—either antecedent condition may yield the same action. I thank Partha Mukherji for raising the issue.

11. See Section V 'Error in Science' below for an arbitrary 'definition of situation' even in the domain of science, when it is backed by overweening political power and the like. Lysenko's dominance of Soviet plant breeding for a whole generation is a classic case in point.

12. The reader might notice the paraphrase here of the 'two types of error' in statistical hypothesis testing (Dixon and Massey 1957: 88).

13. Yet 'we do not jump out of airplanes without a parachute' (Olaf Andersen, personal communication)!

14. They may have learned to work with such doctrines as Kant's categorical imperative: that the rational actor use one's autonomous reason, to define one's courses of action for oneself such that the corresponding principles could be made universal laws too (Scruton 1982: 69-71).

15. I owe this sentence to Olaf Andersen (personal communication). He adds: 'Many people may try to create different versions of the universe. Most of these individuals are 'crackpots' and will be forgotten; some are later proven right. If the latter individuals gave up trying to convince the skeptics that they indeed are right, there will be little progress. If the former individuals are too successful in convincing people that their picture of the world is correct, things may be even worse. The important point is that there is a subjective quality to all frontier science, which we [scientists] recognize as being part of the process; but which

'lay' people often are unaware of, and they mistake a scientist's personal opinions to be statements about reality'.

16. This is a somewhat simplified–or idealized?–statement. A scholar commonly functions for long periods in areas of high uncertainty, needing an overpowering confidence in one's own insight and judgment to be able to continue at all. Rival interpretations compete in the marketplace of ideas– and of research grants–and therefore lapses from the ideal are not unknown. Yet the scientific enterprise has flourished historically: *because* the ideal does elicit widespread allegiance in practice.
17. I discuss 'intersubjective agreement' here in relation to perception and fields of knowledge. In Section IV noted its importance for everyday social practice too. Its significance for wide-ranging social action should be obvious enough.
18. Ramanujan's distinction between the context-bound and the context-free (1989: Section IV).
19. The implication of this position is clear: the 'spirit' which has taken possession of the patient *is* believed to be real within the patient's culture. The shaman who tries, and may be able, to effect a cure acts in the belief that the spirit is real. See Freed and Freed (1964).

    True, a psychiatrist or psychoanalyst would interpret the phenomenon differently–and yet be able to cure the patient. We may see that the psychoanalyst's abstractions as well as the shaman's 'spirit' are hypothetical entities, yet both believe that these entities have real consequences. Kakar (1982) counterposes the culturally specific modes of therapy with those which seek to transcend the cultural specificities in this domain.
20. The latter question, of the sproutings of ideas and techniques in medieval Europe, raised here only briefly, is part of the larger issue, 'Why Europe?', reviewed at length in Saberwal (1995: Chs. 3-6).
21. These paras summarize Saberwal (1986: 15-17).
22. There are numerous writings on medieval European thought, addressed to the non-specialist: e.g. Piltz 1981 and Leff 1958. These paras rest principally on Leff. Harbans Mukhia kindly loaned me his copy.
23. It has been suggested that theology and law carried a shared base of ideas, assumptions, and 'methods of scholarly thought' in medieval Europe (Dahm 1972: 298f). This would undoubtedly have facilitated their presence together in universities like the one in Paris. The Church, furthermore, was actively involved in employing the technology of law for systematizing Canon Law.
24. The insight here is probably from anthropologist Mary Douglas, though I have lost the reference.

    For such pressure to trigger such a search, the threshold was relatively modest in Europe's case: the Church had been promulgating a shared metaphysics for generations. Such pressure would be weaker, and the threshold higher, where the insulation between occupational realms is more thorough. For a related discussion, Saberwal (1991b, worked into 1995: Chs. 5-7.)
25. I owe this point to a discussion with Mr. Senthil Babu.

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Announcement 1

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The theme of the Congress is **Social Knowledge: Heritage, Challenges, Perspectives**. The following symposia are being organised:

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UNDERSTANDING THE MODERN DALIT MOVEMENT

John C. B. Webster

THE Dalit movement[1] has not received the attention it deserves from histories of modern India written a generation ago. The Dalits were treated either as marginal people without a history of their own or as objects, rather than subjects, of the history of the nation as a whole. Thompson and Garrett[2] did refer to the Dalit movement at several points but never described it (1962: 623, 631, 650). Percival Spear, in his identical revisions both of the modern section of Vincent Smith's *Oxford History of India* (1961: 835) and of P. E. Robert's *History of British India Under the Company and the Crown* (1958: 652-53), refers to Gandhi as the leader of a movement for the uplift of the depressed classes, but merely acknowledges Ambedkar as a 'Harijan leader' of 'outstanding courage and ability.[3] Alone among these earlier British historians of modern India, L. S. S. O'Malley devotes a section to the Dalit movement, but portrays it as a 'movement for the uplift of the untouchables' initiated and sustained by others (1968: 374-81).[4] The latest British history of modern India, that of Judith Brown (1994), does monitor the condition of the Dalits at several points in their history, but makes no reference to any organized efforts by Dalits to improve their own lot.

The Dalit movement has not fared much better in the histories of modern India by Indian historians, who generally relegate Dalits to chapters on social reform and portray them as passive victims, recipients and beneficiaries rather than as active participants in their struggles. The one paragraph that Majumdar devotes to Dalits describes them as objects of philanthropic and social work conducted by others (1956: 959-960). R. R. Sethi refers to Dalits only in connection with the 1932 Communal

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Award and as objects of 'uplift' work (Dodwell 1958: 630-31, 685-86). In his later work Majumdar refers to Ambedkar and the Dalits as participants in the political bargaining of the 1930s and 40s which ultimately led to independence (1969: 479, 494, 521, 639, 696, 731). However, in his lengthier treatment of Dalits in the book Gandhi, social reformers and the Congress are portrayed as the prime movers, while Ambedkar is cast in the role of a perceptive critic (1969: 1000-1012, 523-525). Bipan Chandra confines his treatment of the Dalits to a three page section on 'the struggle against caste' in his text book (1971: 231-33), though he gives them a more activist role than his predecessors. However, this cannot be said of his more recent work which describes only Gandhi's 'Harijan Uplift Movement' (1989: 291-295). Finally, Sumit Sarkar includes brief treatments of the Mahar movement but in the discussion of the 1930s decade only Gandhi's Harijan campaign is highlighted (1983: 56, 243, 328-30).

This brief survey would seem to suggest that there was no such thing as a modern Dalit movement, at least prior to India's independence. To virtually all these historians, Dalits were not movers and, even if they were, they moved not on their own but in the wake of socially concerned members of the dominant castes. Such treatment of the Dalits has been elitist and at times patronizing. Beginning with the pioneering work of Eleanor Zelliot in 1969, a growing number of historical monographs have recently offered a necessary corrective. These provide ample evidence of a Dalit movement prior to the enactment of the 1919 Constitution, growing in size and political significance through the 1920s and 1930s. Dalits may not have had a single organization parallel to the Muslim League or the Hindu Mahasabha, but they did have grassroots organizations; a recognized leadership, pre-eminent among whom was B. R. Ambedkar; and a common demand for political recognition, for their own political representation as well as for dignity, equality and justice. These demands found expression in the 1950 Constitution, of which B. R. Ambedkar was the chief drafter.

This essay provides a brief review of these monographs in the order of their date of publication.[5] Its purpose is both to indicate how the movement is currently being portrayed and to point to several important issues which any historian must face in trying to understand it. As will become apparent from the suggestions for inter-disciplinary discussion

offered, historians will require the help of sociologists and other social scientists in dealing with these unavoidable issues.

Eleanor Zelliot's doctoral dissertation on B. R. Ambedkar and the Mahar movement has not yet been published, but has provided the basis for many of her frequently cited articles (1992). It starts in 1890, 'the year which saw the beginning of articulate protest among the Mahars (Zelliot 1969: 2), and concludes with an assessment of their condition following Ambedkar's death in 1956. Her history moves back and forth between developments within the Mahar caste and the movement on the one hand and, on the other, Mahars' involvement with the changing political context of the nationalist movement to which the British responded by progressively democratizing the political processes. Ambedkar, as both the acknowledged leader of the Mahars and a recognized spokesman of the Dalits, provides a continuing meeting point for these two developments. Zelliot makes considerable use of the analytical contrast between the traditional and the modern in writing this history. The early leaders of the Mahar movement, including Ambedkar, belonged to the non-traditional elite; they used modern methods of political agitation (petitions, newspapers, conferences, the Depressed Classes Institute, political parties); they also appealed to modern rather than to traditional values to press their case and further their cause. In this connection 1935 was a major turning point when Ambedkar not only gave up temple entry and renounced Hinduism, but also concentrated on using newly won political power and his own political parties to promote Dalits' interests.

While Zelliot confines her study to only the Mahar movement which had the most outstanding record of accomplishment, J. R. Kamble was the first to attempt a more comprehensive history. His *work* presents 'the saga of [how] people suffering from social, economic and political discrimination from times immemorial. . . . have achieved their emancipation', so that their story might become a part of modern Indian history (1979: xvii). In this narrative account, British rule provided the conditions and Hindu social reformers the changed attitudes (among caste Hindus) which made the Dalits' rise and awakening possible. Much of the history is devoted to Dalit efforts to gain political representation in the legislatures between the Montagu Declaration in 1917 and the Poona Pact in 1932. The book discusses negotiations over

constitutional reform at the national level and assesses the contributions of Ambedkar and Gandhi to the Dalits' awakening, the neo-Buddhist movement. The efforts of the Government of India in promoting Dalit emancipation since independence are also evaluated. Kamble wrote as a nationalist who considered Dalit emancipation as the ongoing work of Dalits and 'all liberal and fair minded people'. He regarded Dalit emancipation as the necessary prerequisite (along with the end of caste privilege) for political stability. He was an unabashed advocate of the Dalit cause who considered their emancipation incomplete and hence requiring vigilance, continuation of the privileges conferred and organized efforts (Ibid.: 291).

By the end of the 1970s, therefore, for a historian of modern India there was not a large body of research on the modern Dalit movement to draw upon. It would be difficult to generalize from the rather exceptional Mahar case in Zelliot's study to the Dalits as a whole or to rely upon Kamble's more general work because its many large gaps and advocacy style may not inspire confidence. This situation would change in the mid-1980s.

The first monograph on the Dalit movement to appear in the 1980s is another case study, somewhat similar to Zelliot's. At the centre of Mark Juergensmeyer's work (1982) is the Ad Dharm movement, which is traced from its origins in the 1920s to its demise in 1946 and revival in 1970. His major concern is not however with the history of one particular movement but with the role of religion in the lower caste struggles for social change. He therefore devotes one section of his book to 'competing visions', for example, the Ambedkarite (including Buddhism), the Valmiki, the Christian, the Marxist, and the Radhasoami. Thus, while much of the study is centred in and around the city of Jullundur–the headquarters of the Ad Dharmis where most of his data was gathered–it does provide insights into broader regional developments.

Following Juergensmeyer came three studies aimed at providing a more comprehensive view of the Dalit movement. The purpose of S. K. Gupta's study was to 'present a detailed and analytical account of the multifaceted struggle of the Scheduled Castes, the odyssey of their transformation from an apolitical, ostracized and indigent mass into a crucial factor in the Indian political structure' (1985: ix). He saw this

transformation occurring between the last quarter of the 19th century and the Government of India Act, 1935–the precursor for Dalits to the Constitution of independent India. This transformation passed through three stages: the Dalits' initiation into politics by 1916, their establishing a political identity by 1927, and a marked change in their political status secured in the 1935 act. His account differs most significantly from Kamble's in providing considerable data on the aims and actions of Dalit political organizations at each step in the process of political change. He also saw the social reformers as playing a minimal role in initiating the Dalits into politics. Instead

> . . . political awakening among the depressed classes in the real sense of the term, and their introduction into the national political arena were a part of the process of their increasing importance for the various religious communities and groups that were vying with one another for increasing their strength on the one hand, and tending to decrease that of opponents on the other, in the game of 'politics of numbers'(1985: 168).

Atul Chandra Pradhan (1986) tells essentially the same story as did Gupta, but not in the same way. For one thing, his time frame is different. He considers developments prior to 1917 to be preparatory and treats them in a very summary fashion; however, he then extends his history beyond 1935 to 1947. For another, he organizes his account less around the various British-initiated announcements, missions, commissions, conferences, constitutions and elections than around the three key parties to the emergence of Depressed Classes' as a social reality and a political force to be taken increasingly seriously. These parties were the British policy-makers; Gandhi, and behind him (often far behind him in Pradhan's rendering) the Congress, the Hindu Mahasabha and other organs of Hindu religious opinion; and finally the Depressed Classes themselves, their leaders and organizations. The latter Pradhan divides into two categories: the separatists, such as B. R. Ambedkar and R. Srinivasan, and the nationalists, among whom the relative late-comer Jagjivan Ram was the most consistent.[7] Whereas the former sought recognition as a distinct minority with a separate identity and representation through separate electorates, the latter sought to

become 'an unsegregated and unquarantined part of Hindu society'[8] and to work with the Congress in attaining national objectives. Pradhan's own assessment of both the identity and representation issues was closer to the nationalists' than to the separatists' position. For Pradhan, the emergence of the Depressed Classes did pose a 'problem' in national politics, second only to that posed by the Muslims, which remains not easily resolved. The concluding paragraph of his chapter on 1939-1947 provides an essentially happy ending to his story,

> With Ambedkar as the 'Father of the Indian Constitution' and the Congress as the ruling party, which under Gandhi's leadership had committed itself to the uplift of the backward sections of society, the Constitution of the Indian Union accepted the responsibility for ensuring the political representation as well as the legal, social, economic, educational and cultural development of the Scheduled Castes (1986: 313).

Trilok Nath (1987) aims to 'throw some light on the socio-political conditions which necessitated evolution of policies which made the 'Depressed Classes' participation in politics a reality, however pale' (1987: vii). He concentrates primarily upon the decade from 1927 to 1937, although his treatment of the history from the end of the 19th century grows increasingly detailed as he approaches 1927. Like Gupta, he saw the communal struggle for power following the Aga Khan deputation and the 1909 Constitution as providing the Depressed Classes an opportunity for political participation. Also, like both Gupta and Pradhan, Trilok Nath not only concentrates upon politics at the All India level, which he considers to have been crucial for Dalits, but he also provides considerable information on Dalit political activities aimed at influencing policy at the Centre. His study, however, is brief. In his treatment of the 1927-1937 period, his narrative on the constitutional struggle stops with the Poona Pact instead of with the Government of India Act. He also devotes a chapter to temple entry and conversion, subjects which Pradhan treated but Gupta largely ignored. Also, like Pradhan, Trilok Nath generally pays more attention to differences between Dalit leaders and/or organizations and devotes a separate chapter comparing the contributions of Gandhi and Ambedkar.

With the publication of these three studies, there was no longer an excuse for omitting the Dalits from political histories of modern India covering the period between the two world wars. But histories of the Dalit movement since independence are yet to be published. A large number of micro-studies have however, been conducted on reservations, social change, elites, and politics. Barbara Joshi (1982) provides a good overview of these trends.

The number of monographs on modern Dalit history written so far in the 1990s is small. Nevertheless, it has now become apparent that there are major differences of approach to this subject which have implications for the understanding of the Dalit movement. My own study (1994) not only makes use of earlier studies, but also departs from them at three significant points. The first is that it considers Christian Dalit to be Dalits and therefore sets their history within the context of Dalit history. This point is not simply assumed but is argued in some detail at various places in the book. The result is a more inclusive and a rather more complex history. Second, I treated this history as the history of the modern Dalit movement. Of the earlier authors cited, only Zelliot and Juergensmeyer used the term 'movement'; Zelliot limited it to only one caste, while Juergensmeyer applied it to a variety of organized efforts which had anti-untouchability as a common theme. Like them I considered the Dalits themselves to have been the major actors in their own history. Where I differed was in depicting a broader Dalit movement–of which the Mahar an Ad Dharm movements were integral and inter-connected parts–that began in the late 19th century and has continued up to the present time. This movement has gone through three stages, that is, mass conversion in the late 19th century, participation in the politics of numbers from 1917-47, and the politics of 'compensatory discrimination' since independence. Finally, I attempted a brief post-independence history of the Dalit movement. The latter proved to be a rather baffling exercise with no clear models to build upon or to critique.

Next, two disappointments should be mentioned. One is P. E. Mohan's (1993) book which is really not a history at all. In the first five chapters it provides descriptions of those organizations, agencies and individuals who were involved in elevating the Scheduled Castes. The remaining four chapters then assess the results of their efforts in the

areas of economics, education, politics and civil rights. What is missing are the connections and dynamic interaction between the various actors in the four arenas he describes. The other disappointment is the series of *Subaltern Studies*. As Dalits certainly occupy a subaltern position in Indian society, the series could have had a significant impact upon our understanding of Dalit history. However, Dalits have been almost totally ignored, figuring occasionally as victims, even less frequently as minor perpetrators of violence, and only once as producers of a text.[9] Where they are mentioned, class categories predominate and caste is referred to only incidentally.

Jayashree Gokhale (1993) recently published a major study of the Mahar movement which not only covers a longer time span but also focuses more exclusively upon the Mahar community than does Zelliot's earlier work. She argued that 'from a depressed position at the fringes of Hindu society the Untouchable Mahars produced an autonomous political movement for their advancement and emancipation' (Ibid.: 336). This movement passed through several phases: the first from 1890-1930 was an era of self-reform characterized by a concern for social uplift and advance within the Hindu social and ideological order; in the second phase, from the First Round Table Conference until the mid-1950s, the Mahars turned their attention primarily to politics. The defeat of the Republican Party at the polls in 1952 and the mass conversion of Mahars to Buddhism mark the transition to a third phase in which they sought to establish a new identity. The rise of the Dalit Panthers and Dalit literature in the 1970s brought about the shift in the political and cultural orientation of the movement with which Gokhale concluded her study.

Two important distinctions inform Gokhale's analysis. The first is the distinction between the 'class model' and the 'caste model' of Mahar politics, each of which had its own conception of the nature of untouchability and how it is to be overcome.

> The class model was premised on the notion that Untouchability was primarily a socio-economic disability and as such, untouchables had common interests with other members of the lower classes. Emancipation of the Untouchables could occur only through a revolution which would drastically alter the distribution of power in

> Indian society. In this endeavour, Untouchables had to unite with poor peasants, landless labourers, and workers; through the concerted action of all the poor and oppressed of Indian society and their incorporation within a political party, power could be wrested from the high-caste ruling class (1993: 115).
>
> The central notion behind the caste model, on the other hand, was that an irreducible gulf separated caste-Hindus from Untouchables, to the extent that political unity between the two was not possible. The hold of Hindu ideology was too pervasive to allow lower caste Hindus and Untouchables to cooperate for the realization of their common economic interests. Moreover, the problems of Untouchables were unique and could only be solved through the unity of all Untouchables, regardless of region and language. This unity of all Untouchables was to be achieved through a political organization which would operate at the national level (Ibid.: 115).

The Mahars moved back and forth between these two models during the course of their history. The other distinction informing Gokhale's analysis is that which emerged within the Mahar community itself between the urban, middle class elite, who had benefited from reservation or concessions, and the rural masses, who had not.

The most recent monograph on the Dalit movement is by Gail Omvedt (1994). Omvedt treats the Dalit movement as a part, in many ways the leading part, of a broader anti-caste movement which included non-Brahman movements as well (Ibid.: 10). This anti-caste movement was, in turn, part of a yet broader revolutionary democratic movement which included 'the national movement and communist and socialist led working class and peasant movements' as well (Ibid.: 13). Omvedt argues that the Dalit movement in particular and anti-caste movements in general should be seen as anti-systemic rather than basically reformist in nature. In so doing, she challenged the reigning Marxist view which regards class as the most important factor determining exploitation and considers the contradiction between the oppressed Indian nationality and British imperialism as the main one to be overcome and hence relegates the Dalit movement to the diversionary states of a diversionary manoeuvre (Ibid.: 13-14). Historically, the Dalit movement has questioned both the assumptions. On the one hand, it has seen caste (in

both its occupational and purity-pollution dimensions) as exploitative and on the other it has questioned the meaning and identity of 'the nation' when such hierarchical divisions exist within it. Omvedt thus sets her study within a framework that is both Marxist and 'Phule-Ambedkarite' (Ibid.: 22) and concentrates on the Dalit movement in Maharashtra, Mysore, Hyderabad, and Andhra from 1920 to 1956, with a special eye to their relationship to the national movement and to other anti-caste and democratic revolutionary movements. In her analysis, which describes both 'Hinduistic' and 'autonomy' movements among Dalits, the years 1930-32 constitute a particularly significant 'defining moment' in Dalit relationship both to the Gandhian nationalists and to the Marxists. What makes her work so original is both the framework of analysis within which she sets it and her focus upon comparative regional history.

There are still no monographs on the Dalit movement in India after independence. Jogdand's *Dalit Movement in Maharashtra* (1991) does devote considerable space to what he called the post-Ambedkar era. V. T. Rajshekar Shetty's more journalistic Dalit Movement in Karnataka (1978) is also a regional study. There are synoptic accounts such as my own which focus upon protest, conflict and self-redefinition as well as Gail Omvedt's concluding chapter which described post-Ambedkar fragmentation followed by an upsurge of Dalit movement[10] in the 1970s. There have also been overviews of the current Dalit situation in India[11] (as well as theoretical analyses of Dalit movements covering the post-independence period (Oommen 1990, Ram 1995, Shah 1990). There are also numerous micro-studies on various aspects of Dalit life. However, the period from 1947 to the present remains a major chapter of Dalit history which is yet to be written.

If the ideal is a history of modern India with which large diverse groups or categories of Indians can identify, can locate themselves and their forebears in, and can claim as their own, how should the history of the Dalit movement be understood within such a history? The often conflicting understanding of the nature and dynamics of the modern Dalit movement described in this survey points to at least five unavoidable issues which historians must address to answer this question. The first of these is summed up in the question, who is a Dalit? Part of the confusion centres around the connotations of the

word, 'Dalit'—the Marathi and Hindi translation of the British term, 'Depressed Classes'. Thus there is a more narrow reference which, like the original, is confined to the Scheduled Castes, as well as a broader one which includes all those (e. g., women, tribals, the poor of all castes, religious minorities) who either are similarly situated or are considered to be natural allies.

In scholarly approaches to Dalit history, those using a class analysis of Indian society subsume Dalits within categories such as peasants, agricultural labour, factory workers, students, and the like. This, however, not only fails to take account of the basic contradiction and oppression of the Dalits but also diverts attention away from them. On the other hand, those who use caste tend to adopt a communal, or what Marc Galanter has called a sacral, view of caste in their analyses.[12] Thus, only those members of the castes considered untouchables within the Hindu sacral order who remain Hindus by religion are considered Dalits. If they convert to another religion, then they cease to be Dalits. This view is not only at serious odds with the realities uncovered by studies of caste among Christians and Muslims, but also is based upon that highly compartmentalized view of Indian society as a whole which framed the debates over the Constitution of India during the 1920s and 1930s. A more inclusive view, in which caste is seen not as an exclusively Hindu, but as an Indian phenomenon, seems called for.

The second is the conceptual issue concerning the use of 'movement' because it has either been used to refer to different realities or not used at all with reference to the Dalits. Specifically, can one speak of a Dalit movement or only of Dalit movements? Ghanshyam Shah's and Oommen's recent analyses of social movements, both of which include chapters on Dalit movements, reveal how difficult it is to come up with tight definitions or sets of characteristics which do justice to the complexities of diverse social movements in modern Indian history. Certainly, there has not been ideological or organizational unity among Dalits, if those must be the determining criteria. Yet, to borrow Oommen's terminology, there were many similarly placed primordial Dalit collectivities with similar histories of oppression simultaneously seeking to overcome similar deprivations within a common social system, albeit in different regional-linguistic areas and inspired by varying visions of their own and society's future.[13] Moreover, while

these movements did not have a common organization, they did not operate in isolation; they were aware of each other and did have a cumulative impact upon each other over time. Since the purpose of the historian of modern India is not to dissect such phenomena into smaller and smaller isolated bits for the sake of analytical precision, but to develop appropriate descriptive generalizations about significant continuities and changes over time, the label 'modern Dalit movement' for these many simultaneous and interconnected movements makes good sense.

Third, there has been disagreement over the background, and origins of the movement (if that is what it was). There has been a general consensus that it made its appearance on the national political scene soon after the Montagu Declaration in August 1917. What happened prior to that is treated simply as background. Those that treat it in some detail trace the sources of the movement to non-Dalit initiatives rather than to the Dalits themselves. I would argue instead that the modern Dalit movement was from its very inception a movement initiated by Dalits and for the Dalits. While there were Dalits who tried sanskritization and some who used occupational mobility to improve their lot, it was their mass conversions during the last quarter of the 19th century, especially but not exclusively to Christianity, which made their situation, identity and aspirations a matter of public concern. After the Aga Khan deputation and the 1909 Constitution, conversion acquired political overtones because it affected the communal balance of power. It was this situation which Ambedkar was able to turn to such good advantage during the 1920s and 1930s.

The fourth issue concerns the dynamics of this 'movement' not only at the 'centre' but also at the regional and local 'periphery' during the thirty years between the Montagu Declaration in 1917 and independence in 1947. The Dalit struggle during this period under the leadership of B. R. Ambedkar, M. C. Rajah and others was focused primarily upon gaining recognition, representation and power within the changing political order. On this scholars are in basic agreement. Studies of this stage of the modern Dalit movement have tended to concentrate primarily upon the constitutional struggle at the national level, as well as upon the ideology and roles of Gandhi and Ambedkar in that struggle. In fact, their thought seems to have become the major ideological resource

for current reflection upon Dalit activism today. Yet part of any assessment of their ideologies would have to include a 'reality check' based upon studies of grassroots regional and/or caste movements of their day.[14] Certainly, it would be dangerous to generalize on the basis of the well-studied Mahar case alone. Additional studies of a similar nature are necessary for gaining knowledge about the foundations upon which Dalit leaders made their political claims and launched Dalit movements after independence.

Finally, amidst all the plethora of micro-studies, how is the post-independence history of the Dalit 'movement' best understood? Those who have attempted some integration and synthesis of all these studies are not agreed on what they add up to. Two approaches seem to predominate. One attempts to classify the variety of recent Dalit activity. Thus, for example, Nandu Ram differentiates the follwing three types of Dalit activism: movements against socio-economic exploitation and numerous types of atrocities on the Dalits; movements for better access to the opportunities and for realization of goals of equality, liberty, fraternity and justice; and movements for gaining self-respect and dignified social identity (1995: 131).

Alternatively, Barbara Joshi notes 'four alternative paths to equality' which Dalit leaders were advocating when she did her field research 'political power, economic independence, religious reform and social reform' (1982: 123). A second approach seeks an underlying unity beneath this diversity. This is the approach which both Gail Omvedt and I have adopted, albeit in different ways. In a similar manner, Rajni Kothari wrote in a recent article on the Dalits.

> The Dalit's expectation and strategy seems to be designed to challenge the dominant castes by means of education, employment and special rights, in short a struggle against the system that begins with challenging injustices within it, thinking of the struggle against imperialism and other such things as of second order importance. Or, as some of them would say, re-define the nature of imperialism in essentially social terms – both globally and locally (1994: 1592).

During the past decade an important start has been made in studying the history of what I have chosen to call the modern Dalit Movement.

Enough has been done now to recognize some of the major issues which all historians must face in seeking to give this movement its rightful place in modern Indian history. In this essay I have mentioned five which seem unavoidable at present and have indicated how those issues are being framed. More issues will no doubt emerge as studies of this important subject continue. The five issues identified challenge some of the key assumptions about the nature of Indian society and the dynamics of its modern history to stimulate fresh inter-disciplinary re-visioning of the subject.

NOTES

1. This is a revision of the inaugural Ambedkar Lecture at Jawaharlal Nehru University given in November 1995. I wish to thank Professor Nandu Ram of the Centre for the Study of Social Systems for the invitation to give that lecture. A portion of it had been presented in October 1995 to the Fellows of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study in Shimla at the invitation of its Director, Professor Mrinal Miri. This revision has benefited from discussions on both occasions.
2. The work cited here is a reprint. The original edition was published in 1934 and revised following The Government of India Act of 1935.
3. Neither the Dalits nor Ambedkar find any place at all in Spear's more recent book (1973).
4. This was originally published in 1941.
5. I confine myself to monograph length studies of the movement and do not discuss either the biographical literature, especially on B. R. Ambedkar, or the studies of the ideology of Ambedkar, Gandhi or both.
6. Many of these have been republished in her recent book *From Untouchable to Dalit* (1992).
7. In this categorization the other major Depressed Class leader, M. C. Rajah, is a rather problematic figure because he seemed to switch back and forth between the two positions. I see his shifts as basically tactical in nature; what seems to have been constant was his loyalty to Hinduism within which he wanted his people to occupy an honourable place.
8. This is Rajah's phrase.
9. This analysis is based on a survey of the first six volumes. The references above are to Gyan Pandey (1983: 60-129); Arvind N. Das, (Ibid.: 180-227); David Arnold (1984: 62-115): and Gyan Pandey (1984: 231-70).
10. This is a distillation of a much longer chapter on the anticaste movement during the post-independence period in her *Reinventing Revolution* (1993)
11. See for example, Oliver Mendelsohn and Marika Vicziany, (1994). Most of this paper is devoted to poverty, discrimination and to what is being done about them. The section on Dalit activism is entitled, 'Failure of Untouchables Political Mobilization'.
12. He contrasted this with the sectarian, associational, and organic views.
13. Oommen saw these movements crystallizing first against socio-cultural oppression (especially untouchability), then for political enfranchisement, and most recently against economic exploitation. Yet he conceded not only that these could and did

overlap but also that some movements combined the three elements (1990: 256-57).

14. This is the most important thing lacking in M. S. Gore's (1993) otherwise excellent study of Ambedkar's ideology. Gore relied almost exclusively on sources either by or about Ambedkar.

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IDEOLOGY, POWER AND RESISTANCE IN A SOUTH INDIAN VILLAGE

N. Sudhakar Rao

SEVERAL studies are now available on local, unconventional forms of resistance or everyday protests which are not necessarily aimed at overthrowing the existing order (Abu-Lughod 1990; Comoroff 1985; Nash 1979; Oommen 1990; Scott 1985, 1986, 1990; Taussig 1980). These studies raise serious doubts about the theory of 'false consciousness', and of the relevance of the distinction between symbolic and instrumental forms of resistance in understanding power relations. The nature of power and its mode of operation are now regarded as more complex than it was thought earlier. While noting the attraction of studying resistance, Abu-Lughod following Foucault's dictum e there is power there is resistance' 1978: 95-96), exhorts us to 'use resistance as a diagnostic of power' (1990: 41).

In this perspective a study of resistance, in India from the lowest strata upwards, should unfold the consciousness of the Untouchables who call themselves Dalits (oppressed), other subordinate castes (service castes or lower castes) and the nature of power. Mass movements and public protests of the Dalits, their ideologies, styles of protest and achievements have so far occupied the centre in the study, of resistance. There is copious and valuable material that addresses dissent, change, oppression and deprivation of the Dalits. But these refer mostly to open, violent, sometimes non-violent, well conceived and organized forms of protest which occur only occasionally. Actually, everyday protests of the Dalits and lower castes in the villages occur more frequently and address the above mentioned vital issues besides highlighting the power relations between the Dalits and the dominating groups, but these have barely drawn any attention. In this regard, it may be apt to note

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O'Hanlon's remarks (1988: 222-3) on Guha's *Subaltern Studies* series (1982, 1983, 1985) that one should look not for the virile form of a deliberate and violent onslaught, but for the unconventional forms that are not usually associated with politics. Also, as Oommen (1990: 400) observes, 'everyday protests are rarely analysed or if analysed not viewed as protests'.

It is true that Dalit protests in the country have not yet been translated to wider caste-based mobilizations. The reasons advanced are 'cultural consensus' (Moffatt 1979), patron-client relations, lack of caste consciousness, and economic and political weakness. The weakest explanation for the failure of Dalit protests is the cultural consensus thesis. Further, in a village situation, the hegemonies of caste ideology as moral obligations and interdependency even in the absence of patron-client relationships are considered significant obstacles to mass movements.

Most of the Dalit or Backward Class protests and movements are intricately dovetailed with the ideologies of Mahatma Phule or of Dr Ambedkar. In the villages, where a vast majority of the Dalits live, the ideologies of the national or regional celebrities are hardly known. Though remaining ignorant of such ideologies, Dalits engage in everyday protests promoted and shaped by caste ideologies. There is not one caste ideology as Dumont (1980) or Moffatt (1979) will have us believe, but several (Deliege 1992; Kapadia 1991; Khare 1984; Lorenzen 1988). The Dalits are highly influenced by the local ideologies that serve their interests. As we go along, we shall note what these ideologies are and assess their impact on Dalits and lower castes in a south Indian village. I will examine different forms of resistance as conditioned by the social structure within the village and the region. While doing so I attempt to understand caste ideologies and dominant symbolic constructs such as that of family that have muffled Dalits' resistance. I shall also examine the discursive application of power by the dominators which not only provokes the spirit of resistance, but also dissipates or suppresses it.

I conducted field work for my doctoral dissertation in 1990-91 in the village called Thalupuru in the Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh. There are 23 castes including Muslims and Christians in the village which has a total population of 2,211. The Kammas, traditionally agriculturists, are

dominant in the political, economic and religious spheres. Other upper castes in the village are: Brahmin, Reddy and Komati. The Balija, Gowda, Golla, Vadde, Dudekula, Chakali and Mangali are the low castes[1] whereas Madiga, Mala and Vettimala are the Untouchable castes–the Dalits. The three Dalit castes together comprise about one-third of the village population, but are poor. Most of the population depends on mica mining, though agriculture is an important occupation. The lower castes and Dalits suffer from 'multiple oppression' and 'cumulative domination' in the village. I have grouped them as subordinates because the upper castes (dominators) dominate over them.

As this paper is about forms of resistance and implied strategies of power in the village, I shall first discuss the nature of power and its manifestation in *de facto* royal and magisterial authority and in the idiom of domestic legitimacy. It is followed by an exploration of the ideological basis of resistance among the Dalits and lower castes. Then I give a description and analysis of forms of resistance. Finally, an attempt is made to extrapolate from the forms of resistance the strategies of power adopted in the village.

Power in the Caste System

Dumont (1980: 153) defines power as the legitimate force within a given territory; political and economic power rests with the king who is subordinate to the Brahmin. The king exercises secular power whereas the Brahmin holds religious authority. In this conception, political and economic power is transmitted at the village level to the village headman who is a representative of the king. The power of the headman percolates to the members of his caste who enjoy some of his prerogatives. Besides this, the Brahmin's 'purity' descends upon the village headman, members of his caste as well as upon the members of other castes with whom he interacts and serves. But 'impurity' engulfs all Untouchables. The low castes are 'pure' with reference to the Untouchables but they stand out as 'impure' *vis-a-vis* the upper castes.

The village headman used to be the supreme hereditary authority in the village until this position was abolished in the state in 1984. This position was held by a Kamma family which claimed a genealogical link with the Gandikota[2] rulers, representatives of Vijayanagara rulers during

the 17th century. The 'legitimate force' mentioned above is endowed in this Kamma family in particular and the Kamma caste in general.

It was customary for every household in the village to contribute one man day of free labour[3] on the headman's farm. This demonstrates the headman's dominance and the subordination of all the villagers.[4] Defiance of this rule was a serious crime inviting physical retribution. No complaint could be lodged with the police or dispute referred to the court without the headman's consent. The headman and some upper caste leaders examined or tried the disputes that were brought to their notice. An appeal against such judgements to any other authority was treated as disloyalty and invited severe punishment. In disputes between a Kamma or any upper caste person and a low caste man or Dalit, the decision invariably went in favour of the former. No low caste person could refuse to comply with arbitrary demands made by a Kamma for a chicken or a goat at a price unilaterally fixed by the latter. A low caste woman had no recourse but to surrender if a Kamma eyed her and wanted to be gratified by her. No low caste or Dalit man could smoke a cigar or *beedi* while passing through the village. He was not supposed to allow the *pancha*, a garment wrapped around the waist, to hang below the knees, and his women could not wear blouses. He could not wear sandals when walking through the village street but had to carry them in hand, only to wear them after crossing the village. The low castes and Dalits had to remain standing in the presence of upper caste men whom they had to address using honorific terms. When an adult Kamma happened to pass by, whether inside the village or in the field, they were expected to stand up.

The headman used to be the first person to be contacted by officials visiting the village. Itinerant groups of traditional entertainers such as story tellers, magicians and gymnasts wanting to perform in the village required the headman's permission. Every wedding party in the village was required to honour him with a symbolic gift of betel leaves and nuts called *pydimudupu* before commencing the wedding rituals. Madigas were not supposed to contract any marriage without his consent. The low castes and Dalits suffered such oppression for centuries probably because of the village ideology which stressed interdependence and harmony which is discussed in the next section.

Fictive Kinship and Power

The notion of the 'village republic' in which the headman represents the *raja* (king) and functions as his political agent, administrator and magistrate, is familiar to South Asian specialists. Along with this is the cultural construction of the village as a 'family', in which members of all castes live in harmony. An analysis of this construction reveals the power that operates through the structure of the caste system.

Fictive kinship integrates all the villagers except the Brahmins. Villagers who are not consanguineally related or affines address each other as *mama* (mother's brother or father's sister's husband). The term also refers to the wife's father as cross-cousin marriage prevails in the area. Its reciprocal term is *alludu* (sister's son in the case of a male speaker, brother's son or daughter's husband in the case of a female speaker) in their daily interaction. These terms are applied depending on the caste status and age of the persons concerned. Usually a low caste person and sometimes even a Dalit male or female, addresses an upper caste person (male) or a member of the caste having roughly the same status as *mama*. The addressee reciprocates with *alludu* or *oi* or *ore*. The term *oi* or *ore* or *me* (in case of females) are not actually kinship terms but singular terms used by a senior to express affection and familiarity with a junior. Sometimes terms like *peda* or *chinna nayana* (father's brother), *atha* (mother's brother's wife or father's sister or wife's mother or husband's mother), *anna* (brother), *vadina* (brother's wife), *bava* (sister's husband), *thatha* (father's or mother's father) and *avva* (father's or mother's mother) are used. These kinship terms express familiarity and a sense of belongingness between members of different castes.

One wonders why this terminology is used. The villagers describe their communal living as that of a 'family'. Informants belonging to the untouchable Madiga caste characterize their relationship with the Kamma landlords as a parent-child relationship. The Kammas depend on the Madigas for tilling their lands and for domestic services whereas the Madigas depend on the Kammas for foodgrains and employment.

When a household faces an adverse situation or a calamity, others come forward to help or show sympathy to the affected household irrespective of caste affiliation. Should any dispute arise regarding the superiority of one's village *vis-a-vis* another, village solidarity comes to the fore. One is expected to extend moral support to one's village and

work for its betterment. The rich upper castes are ideally required to look after and help the poor low castes. The latter are expected to sincerely serve and support the former in all matters. Thus, interdependency, solidarity and unity are expressed in the idiom of kinship and family.

The villagers who represent the village or act as its spokespersons are called *grama peddalu* (village elders) who generally belong to the upper castes. Age is used in determining the status of an elder. Though status is culturally defined, individuals view themselves as autonomous beings making their own decisions and acting accordingly. Kinship terms and kin sentiments are effectively used to downplay and even undermine the aspect of hierarchy.

Further probing into other dimensions of the fictive family such as the exercise of authority and control and maintenance of discipline unfolds different aspects of communal living in the village. In the traditional system, the village headman was not only the political and religious head, but also a protector, provider and the patriarch. He belonged to the caste which generally owned most of the lands and in the present village it owns 55 per cent of the land and four mica mines. The headman had to take care of the needs of the rest of the villagers by providing work and other services. As the father, he was the right person to mediate with strangers.

The domination of the village headman over the low castes and Dalits was similar to that of a parental authority. He administered justice and regulated behaviour to conform to the norms of the village just as a father does in the family. Apart from several others, the norms largely included maintenance of privileges sanctioned to the upper castes and autonomy of each caste in regard to its particular customs and practices. Maintenance of solidarity and unity of the village and loyalty to the headman and the village elders was also emphasized in this patriarchal culture.

At times Dalits and members of low castes did deviate or overlook traditional rules and regulations. These were sometimes considered grave offences threatening the traditional system based on the authority of the village headman in particular and of the upper castes in general. Acts of defiance which were not serious were, however, treated as 'mistakes made by children' and ignored. In inter-caste disputes if some

biased judgements alienated the subordinates, members of the upper castes would even coax and cajole the aggrieved persons into compliance.

Traditionally, washermen (*chakalis*) and barbers (*mangalis*) were paid annually in grain for their services which was referred to as *mera*. They also received gifts during the performance of various life cycle rituals in their patron's family. *Chakali* women would get a new sari and food on birthdays and during puberty rituals in upper caste households. For weddings, gifts would be either a gold ring or new clothes for the entire family. Food was provided during post-funeral rituals and annual ancestral worship. Similarly, during tonsure ceremonies, the barber received clothes or cash. During weddings, it was mandatory for the barber to play the traditional pipe for which he received two sets of clothes or gold ornaments besides monetary remuneration. The washermen and barbers had been receiving these gifts from all castes except the Untouchables. These gifts flowed from the superiors to the inferiors and among the equals and created sentimental bonds and moral obligations. 'Be loyal to the house where you tasted the salt' or 'Do not count the beams of the house where you have eaten food', were popular sayings enjoining loyalty to the house from which one partook of food. Such sentiments often suppressed the motivation to revolt and resist. In other words, gifts cushioned the effects of domination.

Upper caste men who had the reputation of being good obliged their clients with loans, food and liquor on religious and social occasions. Customary gifts or doles during religious festivals and on life cycle rituals at birth, puberty and wedding were given generously. Defiance of norms was regarded as stupidity or wickedness of individuals who were duly warned. 'Good' clients were those who remained submissive and meek despite the arrogant behavior of their patrons. Patrons who did not give gifts and harassed their clients for small matters acquired a bad reputation. Those who did not tolerate even minor infringement of norms and exercised their authority wilfully were considered 'bad' patrons.

Unlike in the surrounding villages, the traditional leadership in the village was in the hands of *peddakapu* and *acharakapu*. The *peddakapu* was the secular village headman mediating the village with the external world whereas the *acharakapu* was the ritual head confining himself to

religious affairs and to the arrangement of services between Kammas and Madigas known as *kamathalu*.

In the *kamathalu* system, certain Madiga families were attached to a Kamma family for a period of six years for agricultural service. The Madiga families were entitled to food and grains till the harvest time of the given year. The system had to be abandoned around 1972. Erratic rainfall, high wage rates in the mica mines and the widespread feeling that the Madigas were no longer 'sincere' and were becoming arrogant contributed to the demise of this institution.

When the position of the village headman was abolished in 1984, a son of the former village headman had been the Grama Sarpanch (the elected head of the village panchayat). He had held this office from 1964 to 1982 and in 1984 was elected to the position of the Mandal President[5] which he occupied till 1991. He has been the *de facto* leader of the village although he has now no official position. He informally adjudicates disputes brought to him off and on.

From the above description, it is evident that moral, obligatory and affective sentiments neutralize the effects of domination in the village. Although the Dalits are acutely conscious of their exploitation and oppression, they curb their instincts to rebel because of sentimental attachment to the dominators and because of the value placed on village solidarity. Despite such ideologies and sentiments, however, the village also nurtures egalitarian ideologies which occasionally inspire the Dalits to rebel.

Egalitarianism in Caste

Ironically, we can also notice the existence of values in Hinduism that defy the hierarchical caste system and inspire and encourage the Dalits and low castes to argue for egalitarianism.[6] Thalupuru villagers are immensely influenced by local Sri Potuluri Veerabrahmam and Sri Venkaiahswamy.

Sri Veerabrahmam is one of the most popular saints in the Telugu region. He attained *jeevasamadhi* (i. e., buried alive) in his *mutt* (seminary) which is at a distance of 120 kms from Thalupuru. He was born in the *vishwabrahmana* (smith) caste and lived in the later part of 17th century.[7] Sri Veerabrahmam held that a Brahmin was one who acquired wisdom by mastering Vedic knowledge and not the one born in

a Brahmin family. He denied the origin of *varnas* from different parts of Brahma's (the creator) body.[8] He interpreted Brahma's head, shoulders, thighs and feet metaphorically as referring to hierarchy of wisdom, and argued that the sages in the Vedic period were born to animals, *chandala* (Untouchable) women and even inanimate objects, and that caste had never existed (Javangula n. d: 346-47). Sri Veerabrahmam accepted as his disciples a man whose family had converted to Islam, and an Untouchable–a daring act those days. It is only apt to mention here that whenever the issue of caste hierarchy was raised by me, the Dalit respondents used to immediately recall Sri Veerabrahmam's preachings on caste equality.

Sri Venkaiahswamy, who wandered in the region around Thalupuru, passed away in 1982. He was another popular saint among the villagers. He belonged to the Kamma caste and was reputed for his virtues, ideal devotion and clairvoyance. He helped those who sought his advice and accepted food from all castes. He allowed people to worship him while he was still alive. A shrine has come up in a nearby village to worship him. No discrimination is practiced in this shrine. Universal love was his main message. He vowed not to turn away from anyone who truly loved him and exhorted people to shun anger, jealousy and hatred. He wanted people to be helpful to others and to give up immoral practices.

One of Sri Venkaiahswamy's disciples is a middle-aged Untouchable living on the eastern side of Thalupuru. He acts as the Saint's medium as well as of the goddess Kanakadurga and is a living example of spiritual equality and universal love. People of all castes from far and near come to Thalupuru to seek his help in exorcising evil spirits and in solving their personal problems, such as finding lost cattle (Pesala n. d). A Kamma donated 10 acres to him to build an *ashramam* (hermitage). In maintaining the *ashramam* he is helped by a Brahmin woman.

These local saints and seers stand as testimonies to spiritual and human equality. Several villagers now question the Brahmanical theology and the *varna* hierarchy. A Dalit in the village offers an alternative to the Brahmin theology. According to him man is made of *pancha bhutas* (five elements)–air, earth, water, light and sky (ether). God, the supreme being, also embodies the same substances, but possesses greater powers. God can disintegrate himself into these elements, and can reconstitute Himself at will. Further, He transforms

and refracts Himself into different forms. And since the constitution of man and God is the same, man himself is God. He splits the Telugu term for god, *bhagavanthudu*, into *bhaga*, which means the womb, and *vanthudu* which means the one who comes out of it. Hence God and man are the same, God being called man. Since all caste people, male or female, come into the world by the union of male and female substances, and through the womb, there is no difference at all between the castes. He quips, 'If Brahmins are superior to anyone else, why are they not born from the mouth?' In support of caste equality he gave me a book written under the aegis of Alwar saints which narrates a story of Lord Krishna dispelling Arjuna's prejudice against an Untouchable man (Neeli 1980). Undoubtedly, these egalitarian values legitimize the Untouchables' resistance to upper caste domination.

Today, the traditional restrictions imposed on the low castes have disappeared. The Dalits now wear proper clothes and put on sandals even while passing through the main village. Smoking while walking in the main street is now common. They do not rise when an upper caste man passes by, although they may do so out of courtesy when he approaches them. They do not fear retribution for being discourteous towards the upper castes and refuse outright unreasonable demands made on them by the Kammas. They are willing to even resort to the use of violence to protect their women from being raped or molested by the upper castes. They are no longer submissive and openly express their defiance of the upper castes if they feel that some injustice has been done to them.

The upper castes have now been forced to accept the changed circumstances. Several Kammas and the Brahmins who had earlier grown rich on farming and mica mining have now lost their wealth. The Dalits have found new employment opportunities in charcoal making, collection and sale of scrap mica and white stone cutting. With the financial support of the government many have become economically independent; running food stores, rearing sheep and buffaloes, and cultivating land through well irrigation. Poor Kammas do not look any different from a moderately rich Dalit–now they even borrow money from the rich Dalits.

The authority of the Kammas has been reduced because they could not effectively impose the hierarchical norms on immigrant Dalits

working in the mica mines and in government offices. The practice of untouchability, imposition of punitive fines on the Dalits, and the social boycott of Dalits for petty crimes are now punishable under law. Further, the prospect of the Dalits lodging complaints with the police which entails several visits to the police station and the consequent loss of social status and the expenses involved in prolonged litigation impel the Kammas to exercise restraint. The Kammas now also depend on the Dalits for electoral support and are reluctant to incur their displeasure.

In the new situation it is the turn of the Dalits to be arrogant. They can be found shouting or abusing upper caste persons anonymously as they walk in the streets. Occasionally, upper caste elders are confronted on the street by Dalits demanding explanation for the misbehaviour of some of their fellow castemen. The Dalits deliberately break all the traditional norms which discriminate against them and oppress them. They have now unilaterally decided to start work in the fields late in the morning (8 a. m.) and wind up for the day early in the afternoon (2 p. m.) unlike in the past when they used to work from 6 a. m. to 6 p. m.[9]

Although the Dalits have now become assertive they still remain poor and politically weak. They still cannot effectively retaliate when the upper castes commit atrocities on them. They have no leader to protect them in the village. Under the circumstances their everyday protests take the form of foot dragging, especially in the mica mines, absenteeism and stealing as in Kerala (Oommen 1990). Besides these, there are various other forms of resistance as indicated by O'Hanlon below:

> Every dichotomy between domination and resistance, as we currently conceive it, bears all the marks of dominant discourse, in its insistence that resistance itself should necessarily take the virile form of a deliberate and violent onslaught. Rejecting this, we should look for resistance of a different kind: dispersed in fields we do not conventionally associate with the political; residing sometimes in the evasion of norms or the failure to respect ruling standards of conscience and responsibility; sometimes in the furious efforts to resolve in ideal or metaphysical terms the contradictions of the subaltern's existence, without addressing their source; sometimes in what looks only like cultural difference. From this perspective, even withdrawal from or simple indifference to the legitimating structures

> of the political, with their demand for recognition of the values and meanings which they incessantly manufacture, can be construed as a form of resistance (1988: 222-223).

I shall describe some of these forms of resistance as noted and observed in Thalupuru.

Forms of Resistance

Resistance often expresses itself in acts of subversion, assertion of rights, damaging one's own property and defiance of traditional norms by appropriating certain status symbols, singing, withdrawal from associating with the upper castes, retaliation and participation in elections.

Subversion: Overt defiance is combined with covert resistance. Covert resistance may involve active but disguised subversion or passive non-co-operation. While direct confrontation with the oppressors is often avoided, attempts are made to raise the collective consciousness of the Dalits and low castes. The weakness of the subordinates such as lack of spirit of cooperation, educational backwardness and lack of will power are highlighted and the need to act collectively to thwart domination is stressed in such conscientizing efforts.

A matriculate Dalit (Gowda caste) employed in the state government's health department is a political leader in disguise quietly organizing resistance to the Kamma domination. From his early days he disliked the oppression and brutality to which the lower castes were subjected by the Kammas. He was involved in student politics and has the reputation of having defeated his Kamma rivals in student's union elections. He has gained popularity in the area by offering free medical service to the people. His job, which is to educate the masses in family planning, gives him easy access to the people. He secretly canvasses against the Kammas during elections for the Panchayat, Mandal and State Assembly seats and encourages the low castes and Dalits to fight Kamma tyranny. His association with the government's Adult Education Programme gives him a cover to conscientize the Dalits. His activities are supported by his relative who is a full-fledged politician in a nearby village. The latter managed to frustrate the Kammas who were pressing for his transfer elsewhere. It is noteworthy that there are now many

others like him among the Dalits who work silently to resist their oppressors.

Non-Co-operation: Today, the service castes in the village assert their rights through deliberate non-cooperation. They resent the upper castes dictating terms to them and express their resentment by choosing to work at their own pace. In the past Chakalis (washermen) used to collect *neerukayi pancha* (men's lower garment that got wet during the morning bath) from their patrons' homes everyday, wash them at the ghat and bring it back to their patrons the same evening. Other soiled clothes used to be collected twice a week to be washed and returned in the evening on the same day. Now the practice of collecting wet clothes has disappeared and soiled clothes are collected not more than once a week. They bring back washed clothes only after several reminders. If the patron is abusive or if he fails to pay the agreed amount of annual wage, they bluntly ask him/her to find another washerman.

Mangalis (barbers) in the village refuse to visit Kammas in their homes to cut their hair unless they are requested politely at least a couple of times. If a patron does not pay immediately for shaving or cutting hair or if he is stingy in giving grains at the harvest, they find numerous excuses not to visit his home. A Mangali who was recently asked to play *dolu* (drum) at a funeral, refused by pretending that his *dolu* was broken. A few years ago he could not have so easily evaded the obligation. Members of service castes feel that they have been exploited for ages and nobody is interested in their welfare. They also feel that everybody rides roughshod over them by issuing commands and orders. Now they do not tolerate such behaviour. Since their *manyam*[10] lands were 'appropriated' often through fraudulent means by the Kammas they no longer feel obliged to render free service for the village rituals.

Damaging Property: Resistance often involves damaging the property of dominators as is the case with some of the peasants and tribes in India (Arnold 1982; Guha 1982; Hardiman 1982) or the peasants of Malaysia (Scott 1985). In Thalupuru the Dalits and low castes prefer to cause damage to their own property as a form of resistance. A Mangali accepted a contract to play music at the wedding of a Velama (an upper caste) family in a nearby village. He went with two other Mangalis to play music on the appointed day. The Velamas have retained several wedding rituals which entail taking out processions several times

between the bride and the groom's camps and include several rituals. For each of these processions and rituals they needed music. The Mangalis, who were performing at a Velama wedding for the first time, were taken by surprise at the incessant demands made on their services. They had a hard time trying to put up with such demands because carrying the *dolu*–which weighs about fifteen to twenty pounds–and playing the drum with both hands is extremely strenuous. Hence one of them lost patience and deliberately punctured the *dolu* by striking very hard. This gave them a good excuse to stop playing music and yet receive payment as per the contract.

Covert Revenge: In the face of resistance from the Dalits the upper castes have been feeling helpless. They cannot use force to make their former subordinates 'behave' and show respect because of the police and the law enforcing agencies. Their only defense is to maintain a semblance of prestige by using sarcasm and by making fun of the Dalits when they try to imitate the upper castes. Such ridicule has not, however, prevented the Dalits from appropriating upper caste status symbols. They do so deliberately to remind the upper castes of their arrogant ways in the past and take delight in their helplessness to put down such open defiance.

When I asked some Untouchable youths, how they felt about the upper castes mocking at them one of them burst out saying:

> The assholes of upper castes will be burning out of jealousy. My sons! Bastards! Let them burn and let them die. Who cares? We will buy (clothes) and put them on. We know they are not happy; let them feel unhappy and kill themselves with their unhappiness.'

Such pungent expletives and offensive remarks directed at the upper castes also reveal a deliberate desire to avenge the indignities they suffered in the past. It is only on such occassions that the intensity of their anger comes out. There is no hint of it however when one observes the Dalits engaged in their everyday tasks.

Another form of resistance is to show outward deference, politeness and loyalty so as to gain some space to express dislike and hatred towards the dominators. Scott (1990) convincingly shows how the subordinates defy the norms while exhibiting external deference to the

dominators. Here I shall give two specific forms of resistance containing such 'hidden transcripts'.

Wearing the Sacred Thread: Of all the appropriations, the claim over the sacred thread by the low castes and Untouchables is a radical and popular form of resistance (Kumar 1985: 127-154; Majumdar 1958: 76-78; O'Hanlon 1985: 40-44). In Thalupuru, there is an Untouchable man who wears the sacred thread.[11] According to him, the sacred thread is a mere symbol of Vedic knowledge, and there are no caste restrictions against wearing it. He asserts that no one, including the Brahmins, is born with a sacred thread and that one is invested with it upon attaining spiritual and physical maturity. According to him, the Brahmins and other upper castes have selfishly appropriated the symbol and prohibited other castes from wearing it. He quips, '*jagamerigina brahmaudiki jyendyamela*?' which translates to: 'Why does the Brahmin who knows all about the world need to wear a sacred thread?' He implies that the Brahmin needs to wear the sacred thread only because he seeks a higher status and material benefits that go with it and to cover his lack of knowledge of the Vedas. He further argues that he has the right to wear the sacred thread because he has acquired Vedic knowledge and is in no way inferior to a Brahmin. The upper castes mock at him behind his back, but this does not faze him. Other Untouchables, however, are not impressed. They say that it does not matter whether one wears the sacred thread or not because it cannot feed one.

Chindu Dance: The performance consists of a rhythmic stamping of legs, movement of hands and display of ferocity, superiority and aggression. It takes place during the wedding processions of upper castes. *Chindu* is performed to the beat of drums called *thappetlu* or *palakalu*. During this performance, the Madiga dancer raises each leg and forcefully stamps it to the ground. The dance[12] allows him to legitimately raise his leg against the members of upper castes who are watching it. For the Madiga the gesture symbolizes crushing of the upper castes under his foot; this meaning is hidden from the latter who in any case are usually in a jovial mood on such occasions to take affront. Similar forms of resistance can be noted in some of the other village rituals as well where resistance becomes more transparent though it is coloured with appropriate religious sentiments.

Ritual Abuses: Malas and Madigas take up very important but menial

roles in the village ritual called *jathara* in which traces of resistance can be noted. The story about the goddess narrated on this occasion by a Mala priest called *Asadi* contains issues of male domination, woman's resistance, struggle for power, and asserts the superiority of woman and the subjugation of man (Rao 1993: 203-207). The *Asadi* sings to the goddess hurling abuses at the upper castes to please her. It is believed that the goddess wants to humiliate the proud upper castes for their ingratitude and greed. The *Asadi* says that he does not abuse anyone in particular for fear of retribution after the ritual but his deep-seated antagonism towards the upper castes becomes transparent in the course of the ritual.

Later the Asadi expressed his resentment towards the upper castes thus:

> 'What does a landlord do in the field? Nothing. He hires labourers (us), two or three and gets his work done. But he takes all the produce or benefit but gives us very little. It is the same even in *jathara*. We labour and people give donations/gifts to the goddess but the landlords keep *hundies* (cash box) with them, collect everything and give us only a few rupees.'

He implied that the *jathara* organizers did not give him his share. In the olden days, the *Asadi* and his fellow performers used to get a one-fifth share in everything such as sacrificial animals, food and donations besides a bundle of betel leaves, 250 grams of betel nuts, a blanket and unlimited quantities of toddy. But now he is paid only 50 rupees in cash. He thinks that the upper caste organizers of *jathara* are greedy. He holds that his grandparents were cheated by an upper caste family which usurped their gold ornaments and land.

In these forms of resistance, tradition provides space for the Untouchables to enter into a kind of 'liminal phase' which allows code switching. Personal and/or community-centered codes are superimposed on the conventional ones. It is not possible to avoid the performance of either the dance or the ritual abuse. The upper castes must allow the ritual lest they invite the wrath of the goddess. Wedding processions become dull and uninteresting if the *chindu* is not performed. Therefore, the tradition continues, as does the Untouchables' space for resistance.

Songs and Stories: Lutz and Abu-Lughod (1990: 11-14) argue that emotional discourses do not refer to some internal state but are in and about social life. Here, I wish to stress another point although the social aspect cannot be ignored in the discourse on resistance. The experience of exclusion and oppression inspire the Dalits to produce highly imaginative and expressive song traditions. I here present a song to reflect their antagonism towards the Brahmins and their resistance to the Brahmin ideology.

Narration of stories and song recitals are performed both in public and private spaces. In the public space free expression is restricted whereas in the privacy of one's home or neighbourhood there is greater freedom. Rendition in the public space is more formal, and themes chosen are those which appeal to the public at large, whereas in the private space it is informal and is concerned with personal matters that can be shared with confidants, associates and allies. In the public space the culturally specific activity of the subordinate creates 'sentimental bonds quite independent of the "real" feelings of the person involved' (Appadurai 1990: 110). In the private, however, the inner or real feelings are freely expressed. The protagonist of the following song is a young Madiga woman.[13] Though it is in the form of a dialogue between a Madiga girl and a Brahmin youth, it is rendered by one person only. It narrates the story of a young Brahmin falling in love with a beautiful Madiga girl. He degrades himself by eating carrion. This is followed by the sexual act that further degrades the Brahmin:

Singer: When a handsome Brahmin praying at the tank
When praying– oh my brother!
A cunning Madiga damsel came that side
Cunning damsel came – oh my brother!
The Madiga damsel liked the Brahmin
Liked the man – oh my brother!

Madiga: If you want, why don't you come – my brother!
Why don't you come my lord – oh my brother?

Brahmin: I don't know your village, I don't know you!
I don't know you – oh my brother!

Madiga: Compound wall all around and lime plastering
Lime plastering – oh my brother!

Near lime plastering, village boundary!
The village boundary – oh my brother!
Near village boundary, the path of Suranna!
Suranna path, oh my brother!
Brahmin: I will come and I will come beautiful angel
The beautiful angel – oh my brother!
Madiga: In the compound of Reddy, a calf died
The calf died – oh my brother!
Cut slowly with small knives
Cut slowly – oh my brother!
Brahmin: How do I cut? I am a young Brahmin
Young Brahmin – oh my brother!
Madiga: Put your jajam[14] on the peg
On the peg – oh my brother!
Cut slowly with small knives
Cut widely with big knives
Cut slowly with small knives
Cut widely with big knives
Cut widely – oh my brother!
Singer: Cooked delicious food with chillies and salt
Cooked delicious food – oh my brother!
Madiga: You feed me first and last morsel
You feed me sir – oh my brother!
Brahmin: How do I feed, my beautiful angel?
Beautiful angel – oh my brother!

A strong role reversal and repudiation of roles at the two polar ends of the society–the Brahmin and the Madiga Untouchable–is portrayed in this song. Here the Brahmin, the epitome of purity, eats the most polluting carrion. His passion for the Untouchable woman is so overpowering that he sets aside his purity and caste superiority, removes his sacred thread, brings a dead calf, butchers it and eats it with his Madiga love. This song suggests the hypocrisy of the Brahmins who claim to be superior to the others. It is a statement seeking to exact retribution from the Brahmins for imputing intrinsic impurity on the Madiga caste. Apart from individualistic forms of resistance, there is collective resistance as well. In the following, I shall describe some

forms of such resistance expressed in acts of withdrawal, retaliation and in electoral mobilization. Formal resistance is a direct and visible response to appropriation and coercion which does not necessarily defy social norms.

Withdrawal: Withdrawal is a common form of passive resistance.[15] It includes non-communication, absenteeism and the like. The Malas of Thalupuru village have withdrawn from interaction with the Kammas. It was easy for Malas to do so because unlike the Madigas they were not dependent on the Kammas for their living. The only traditional duty that connected them to the village was to weave coarse cotton saris with red and black stripes which were used for ritual purposes by all castes in the village. As mill cloth came into vogue, demand for woven hand cloth declined in the course of time. The Malas were also not particularly interested in weaving because they worked in the mica mines and on their own lands. Many of them have taken advantage of the new educational opportunities and are working in government offices and private establishments. While the Malas have completely withdrawn from the village, the Kamma politicians now seek favours from the Malas for support during the elections.

Retaliation: Political and economic independence has fostered in the Malas the spirit of retaliation for any injustice done to them. If Kammas or other upper caste persons physically assault them, they are prepared to retaliate in kind. There were two such incidents of retaliation. In one, a Mala beat a Kamma who abused him and demanded free labour for the headman..At that time the Mala was supposed to attend to some work at the mine belonging to another Kamma landlord. Taking advantage of the fact that he was working with another Kamma landlord, the Mala beat up the Kamma. No action was taken against him because it was the Kamma's fault, and the Mala had a genuine ground for defiance.

In another incident, a Mala who was carrying home some beef wrapped in a cloth was called out by a Kamma who was at that time engaged in ploughing. But the Mala did not pay heed to the call and went on his way. He justified his behaviour by stating that it would have been inappropriate to meet the Kamma with beef in hand.[16] The Kamma nursed a grudge against the Mala for disobeying him. Therefore once when he saw him passing by the Kamma locality, he crept from behind and struck him on the head with a stick and ran away before the Mala

could retaliate. The Mala went back home and informed some caste elders who immediately approached the village headman and demanded an explanation for the unprovoked attack. The headman and other elders called the defendant who alleged that the Mala had first abused him. At this the Mala lost his temper and abused the defendant in front of all the Kamma leaders and screamed that he would beat him up whenever he got a chance. The Kammas preferred to keep quiet and swallow the insult because they did not want to attract penalty under the Protection of Civil Rights Act of 1955.

Elections: During the Panchayat elections in the village, caste antagonisms get sharpened. Since the first Panchayat elections in 1950, Kammas had been holding the office of the Sarpanch. Until 1984, however, the elections were nominal for there was no voting; the village headman and other Kammas decided among themselves who would be the President and Members of the Panchayat. In 1984, the Kammas were divided into two groups, one supporting the Congress (I) and the other the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) thereby forcing elections. Since then, however, no elections have been held. The Dalits have withdrawn from the elections because they realize that they are not economically powerful enough to challenge the Kammas. The same holds true for the elections to the Agricultural Co-operative Society which was established in 1950. This did not, however, imply that the Dalits were apathetic to elections. They were prominent in the elections of the local high school where money had no role to play. I noticed that caste politics crept into the school in a big way. Although the adults remained aloof, they took cognizance of the outcome.

The school teachers hold elections every year for the position of School Pupils' Leader (SPL). The Kamma students were eager to capture this office every year although they did not always succeed. When the strength of Dalit students increased in 1982 due to the establishment of a government hostel for them, the Dalits did not allow the Kammas to get elected at all. Then the Kammas threatened the non-Kammas, especially the Dalits with dire consequences if they participated in the elections. As a result, since 1989, the SPL position in the school has been captured by Kammas.

Strategies of Power

From the pattern of resistance delineated above it is now possible to draw inferences on the nature of power relationships. While the Dalits and low castes resist in order to circumscribe the power of the dominators, the latter seek to keep the Dalits suppressed. They also work secretly to reduce the strength of the Dalits. Towards this end, they take recourse to false representation of the Dalits. Thus, a Kamma, an ex-Sarpanch, argued that the government's policy of granting land to the Dalits for their economic development was bad because they were lazy and did not know how to cultivate. Instead, he wanted the lands to be given to the Kammas who, according to him, were good cultivators. Although Kamas owned lands, all agricultural operations were in fact carried out by the Dalits. Had they possessed adequate resources, they certainly would have done well in agriculture. Similarly, upper caste people discourage the low castes and Dalits from sending their children to school on the ground that they are not intelligent enough to pass the high school. Such false representations misguide the Dalits and even government officials who are sympathetic to the subordinates.

The dominators not only possess political, economic and religious power but also exercise it in such a way that the dependence of the subordinates is perpetuated. For instance, during the pre-British period, the low castes and Dalits were not allowed to acquire land. They had to depend on the upper castes for their survival. Times have changed, but even now the political and economic power still remains with the upper castes. The dominators consider it their prerogative to decide whether to help or not, and concede or refuse the requests made by the subordinates. Since power can be exercised effectively on the dependents, the dominators try to prevent their clients from becoming independent.

In the case of Mangalis narrated above, the upper caste family agreed to pay a certain amount for the musical service no doubt, but the duration for which the service was required was not specified. The upper caste family sought the music services of the Mangalis beyond the customary period for which they were required to play. Similarly, the dominators pay low wages to the labourers because they know they are helpless and are in dire economic need. They often make them work for extended hours. Paying wages for a certain amount of work is legitimate but how much to pay and how long the work should be done is to be

decided by bargaining between the employers and the employees. Political and economic power gives the dominators an advantage in such bargaining. The resistance of subordinates is a direct reaction to such exploitation. Stealing, foot-dragging and evasion of work are the obverse of the manipulative strategy adopted by the dominators to extract surplus.

The dominators also adopt the strategy of creating visible differences to invoke deference. They convey superior status by wearing elegant clothes, by using religious symbols and by preventing the subordinates from using them through coercive and persuasive methods. Symbolic gestures and expressive traditions illuminate the strategies of 'public' and 'hidden' transcripts. The 'public transcripts' of the dominators state fair treatment but are in fact exploitative and discriminatory. In 'public transcripts', the subordinates show deference to the dominators, but their 'hidden transcripts' reveal resistance. Both dominators and subordinates adopt strategies which avoid open confrontation and revolt (Scott 1990: 14-15).

Village ritual provides a space where a Dalit can publicly abuse upper castes. Similarly, religious values and sentiments provide a means to justify the actions of dominators. They cannot allow the Dalits to live in the main village because they are engaged in polluting activities. The dominators interpret and apply the principle of the separation of the pure from the impure to their advantage.

The modern state is attempting to change the village power structure through democratic elections. But the dominators ensure that empowerment remains an illusion to the subordinates by a combination of threats and manipulations on which the subordinates' reaction is withdrawal from interaction and/or retaliation.

Power operates both in coercive and non-coercive forms. Coercive power is transparent and visible. Traditional norms had been coercively imposed upon the subordinates. This form of power has been well recognized by Indian sociologists. For instance, Srinivas (1959: 15) writes that use of physical force, boycott and muscle power are some of the criteria defining a dominant caste. Dube (1968:80) states that caste dominance is expressed through abuses, beating, gross underpayment, sexual exploitation and the like. Similarly, Oommen (1970) states that physical force is a necessary element of dominance. But we may note

that domination also works discursively; it works not only through paternalistic behaviour but also through the display of 'public transcripts'. The strategies of false representation work persuasively through the logic of common sense. Most of the time the resisters give in to the demands of the dominators without physical coercion because of their economic dependency. Hardly can one find coercion in the rituals in which subordinates participate by taking on menial positions. They do this because they share some religious sentiments with the upper castes and because they derive some material benefits.

Conclusion

From the above analysis of resistance among the Dalits, the theory of consensus put forth by Dumont (1980), Moffatt (1975: 1979) and supported by McGilvary (1983) does not square with facts. As several others have already pointed out, dissent exists among the Dalits. Their ideology contradicts hierarchy. The Dalits are conscious of their deprivation, exploitation and powerlessness. They espouse the Hindu egalitarian ideology that supports their cause and apply it to justify their attempts for securing equality. However, in their practical life they do not completely eschew hierarchy; in other words they have not developed an independent egalitarian system for themselves.[17] They conform, to a certain degree, to the overarching gradation of castes[18] even though they articulate the notion of equality of castes with a twist.

I believe that the main reason for the absence of egalitarian structure among the Dalits is the hegemonic influence of hierarchy. It is critical for the dominating groups to maintain hierarchy by legitimizing religious values in order to retain their political and economic interests. To this end, they apply discursive power such that the Dalits accept the differentiation of status because it also gives some of them a high status. A vehement refusal of the assigned status or a challenge by a lower caste would even endanger its survival. Whosoever is assigned lower status accept the status of those placed above because of his dependence for food.

The resisters, although they hate hierarchy, domination and the practice of untouchability, do not want to annihilate the caste system. The Dalits like to maintain endogamy so that their values and interests will remain unimpaired. They say, 'Each caste is great in its own way.

So why marry in another caste?' According to them, caste has to do with the occupation and every occupation provides livelihood to the individuals who pursue it. They quote the proverb '*koti vidyalu kuti korake*', which means that ten million occupations, literally knowledge systems, are devised for the sake of earning one's bread. It does not matter what occupation one pursues. As all caste occupations are practiced essentially for food, they should not be used as status indicators.

Styles of domination vary, as much as the forms of resistance. Power is always discursive in its functioning. It has been applied through coercion as well as through persuasion, rewards, temporary status elevation in the performance of certain village rituals, and by conceding certain demands made by the subordinates. Domination can neither annihilate resistance altogether, nor can it tolerate it.

Further, forms of resistance inform us that the Dalits' dissent of caste ideology is quite old. Reform movements have added from time to time the Dalits' discontent with the existing system. We may conclusively say that everyday protests had been occurring even before the organization of reform movements and their conversion to different faiths.

As the the feudal system is gradually giving way to the democratic system, coercive relations are disappearing. Non-coercive methods, such as persuasion, are being used to gain the Dalits' cooperation. At the same time, hidden and passive forms of resistance are becoming open and public. It may be seen here that symbolic forms of resistance are the harbingers of instrumental protests. Instrumental protests have taken the form of both violent and non-violent mobilization of groups and communities.

NOTES

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1. These essentially belong to 'Backward Class' category of the government.
2. Gandikota is 200 kms towards north-west of this village. Under attack by Muslim rulers the Nayaka rulers of Gandikota fled to different places; one of these families happened to settle in Thalupuru.
3. The employees in the government establishments and the mica mines who belonged to other villages and towns were exempted.
4. This corresponds to the practice of the Venkatagiri Raja among his subjects. Every village was required to send a pair of bullocks, a cart and a plough before the agricultural season started for ploughing Raja's lands. Venkatagiri town is only 50 kms from the village.
5. The Mandal was a taluk level elected body of the Panchayati Raj institutions introduced in Andhra Pradesh in 1984. Each district was divided into Mandals which outnumbered the taluks in a district. The *grama sarpanch* was the elected head of the new village panchayat.
6. Mahatma Gandhi viewed caste system not in hierarchical order but in terms of interdependence and equality. Beteille (1987) argues that the Hindu society, which is the epitome of hierarchy, gives due recognition to equality and the American society while denying hierarchy in practice functions on the basis of hierarchy. Lorenzen (1988) argues that Kabir Panth in north India preached abolition of status differences that plagued Hindu society, which he terms as non-caste Hinduism. Similarly we find preachings of Bhakt Thukaram and other saints in Maharashtra on human equality. Alwar and Nayanar saints in south India preached spiritual equality and conferred sainthood even on Untouchables. The *bhakti*, 'devotional and love' in Hindu tradition had discredited hierarchy and held human equality in high esteem. Untouchable saints like Ravidas in Punjab and Ghasidas in Madhya Pradesh raised their voices for an egalitarian social order. The Sankhya philosophy and Buddhist theology, which posits divine manifestation in human body regardless of caste, are popular among the Untouchables of Lucknow (Khare 1984). Karin Kapadia (1991) finds divergent discourses on the caste ideology and menstrual pollution among the upper castes and Untouchable women in rural Tamil Nadu.
7. Stephen Fuchs (1965) calls him a rebellious prophet.
8. In the region around Thalupuru the origin myth of caste is popularly associated with the Brahma rather than with Purusha.
9. This is mainly due to the impact of the mica mines where the work schedule in two shifts is from 7 a. m. to 2 p. m. and from 2 p. m. to 9 p. m.
10. Rent free lands given to them for the services they rendered to the village. These lands were assigned to them for their services at village rituals. As long as they enjoyed the usufruct of these lands, they were in an obligation to render free service.
11. Guha (1983: 30) and Oommen (1990: 400) have rightly pointed out that individuals and small groups appropriate symbols of upper castes in a spirit of protest.
12. The Malas do not allow the Madigas to perform the dance at their weddings because they are aware of its hidden messages in the dance. The antagonism between the Malas and the Madigas and the contexts in which they occur Dalit castes come in the way of collective mobilization of all. I propose to attend to this issue later in a separate paper.
13. Trawick (1988, 1990, 1991) elegantly demonstrates how Untouchable women

sometimes produce a unique expressive tradition because of their position and status in society: as women in the gender category and as Untouchables in the social category. Hence Untouchable women undergo double oppression. Similarly in the gender context, Ramanujam (1991) finds a system countering the dominant themes in the stories of women.

14. The sacred thread.
15. Mosse (1994: 83-86) notes the withdrawal of Pallars in a village in Tamil Nadu.
16. According to the dominant Hindu ideology beef eating pollutes man: Untouchables are inherently polluting because they eat beef (see Moffatt 1979). The upper castes do not eat beef.
17. For example, hierarchy obtains among Untouchable castes in Tamil Nadu (Moffatt 1979; Mosse 1994).
18. The hierarchy is not based exclusively on the religious values of purity and impurity (see Rao 1990).

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Announcement 2

Third Worldwide Competition for Young Sociologists

This competition, conducted by the International Sociological Association (ISA), is open to sociologists under 35 years of age on May 1, 1997. Competitors should submit an original paper that has not been previously published, in any of the following languages: English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese and Russian. The winners will be invited to participate in the XIV World Congress of Sociology which will take place in Montreal, Canada, during July 26-August 1, 1998. The winners' papers will be published in English, subject to editorial revision, in the ISA's journal, *International Sociology.*

Enquiries should be addressed to:

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SYMPOSIUM

Notes on the Teaching of Sociology

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The Islamic scholar Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) introduced his science of society (Ba-Yunus and Ahmad 1985:24) about four centuries before the Frenchman, Auguste Comte. However, it is Auguste Comte that generations of sociologists in Asia, Africa and Latin America recognise as the titular founder of Sociology. This historical inaccuracy is maintained–on the basis of an unequal relationship between the 'West' and the 'Rest of the World'–as a given in the global system of production of (sociological) knowledge.

There is a growing recognition of the significance of knowledge produced by people of the developing world. In this effort, tradition is receiving increased attention. Such a complex effort is necessarily multi-faceted. It has to: i) re-interpret/re-invent tradition in order to influence or characterise the present and future, ii) develop culture-specific knowledge systems that establish and sustain a continuity with the past intellectual traditions and iii) produce a less violent, and more dialogical, form of knowledge in comparison to Western knowledge. The first two are also part of the contemporary movement to assert cultural identity.

Such a development in the developing world also reflects the need for a moral regulation of a situation produced by Western intellectual culture, that is, the problem of 'runaway', instrumental rationality. The consequences of the situation are rather serious. After all, is it not internal to the knowledge produced by the West which took Western 'civilization' towards Auschwitz, the (atomic) bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki–a pain neither a generation of Japanese nor the more

sensitive sections of the West have forgotten[1]—or the systematic destruction of simple people and their cultures in the process of economic and political colonisation?

While one can today recognise contestation of Western knowledge at many levels, the one that I will take up for preliminary consideration concerns the construction of Western sociology as Sociology. While the language was unavailable then, today we can boldly say that Sociology is a site of contestation. Scholars in 'our'[2] part of the world are contesting the construction of Western sociology as Sociology. Should not such an intellectual movement/situation spur us to rethink the teaching of sociology in the institutions of higher learning in our parts of the world?

To guide the above effort, perhaps we need to concentrate on some important questions:

1. How do we overcome the identification of sociology as solely a Western, post-Enlightenment project?
2. Do we develop a sociological discourse which is merely (i) an application of theoretical narratives developed in the West, (ii) an attempt to indigenise theoretical narratives developed in the West, or do we develop a different and independent sociological discourse.
3. How do we (i) suture our tradition which has broken away from us due to the intervention of an aggressive colonialism, (ii) proceed to develop from it a methodology and practice of sociology that is sensitive to our cultural realities, and (iii) yet maintain the possibility of cultural dialogue?
4. How do we introduce a 're-framed' sociology into our institutions of higher learning? What are the stages we need to consider to effectively achieve this?

Though the paper does not directly answer the questions raised above, it emphasizes the need to raise such important questions so as to identify key issues regarding the production and dissemination of sociological knowledge in our parts of the world.

The Sociological Enterprise

The production of sociological knowledge is not–and never has been–a democratic activity. To understand this better consider the following table which depicts the division of labour in Sociology:

Principal Activities of the Sociological Enterprise

Civilization/Tradition (Intellectual Culture)	
i	Assumptions (Ontology and Epistemology)
ii	Theoretical Perspectives
iii	Methodology
iv	Method
v	Sampling Method
vi	Sample
The External Socio-Cultural World(s)	

While the higher level activities that is, i to iii, are generally the monopoly of the West, the lower level activities that is, iv-vi, are normally the kind carried out in our parts of the world. As per practice, in nearly all our universities, we are taught to apply theory given to us from the West. In fact, theories produced in our parts of the world are immediately suspect of rigour and authenticity.

There is unquestionably an intellectual 'centre' and 'periphery'. The periphery is not expected to produce theory but merely apply that which has been developed in the West. Such a position is methodologically inspired by positivism. This 'positivist' hangover plagues theory construction in the non-Western world.[3] It is therefore worthwhile keeping in view this reality.

Inspite of the power of Western knowledge, the external and internal critique of Western knowledge is a growing intellectual enterprise emerging from both the developing and developed countries.[4] Take for instance the sociology of the environment. It has recently witnessed a greater recognition of ecologically-sensitive/friendly systems of knowledge produced in the developing world. They are presented as

alternatives to an aggressive and imperialistic system of (Western) scientific knowledge bent upon conquering and dominating Nature.

To expose the limitations of Western knowledge by the use of its own theoretical tools–an internal critique–allows a more comprehensive basis for developing a new methodology of producing not only culture-sensitive but also culture-specific sociological knowledge. While I think we need to develop our 'own' methodology, it should be done in stages: from applying theories given to us by the West, we need to move towards indigenising them or using theoretical perspectives that are 'Other'-sensitive. This theoretical stance opens up a dialogical space for the construction of the 'Other' in Western knowledge, that is, us. Even while a dialogised form of Western knowledge is in the process of formation, we will have to strategically move towards developing rigorous methodologies of producing culture-sensitive and culture-specific knowledge by carefully drawing from our intellectual culture/traditions.

Western Sociology: A Cursory Examination

It is an established academic practice to present Sociology as a science of society that started with post-Enlightenment thinkers. For Western sociologists (and many here) this is historically correct. [5] Auguste Comte has come to be identified as the person who named the scientific study of society as 'Sociology'. Subsequent to this, France contributed another sociologist of eminence, one of the founding pillars of Sociology, Emile Durkheim. Germany gave us a number of great thinkers of whom Karl Marx and Max Weber are the more popular. Sociologists in any part of the world would recognise these names.

Sociology subsequently developed in America after the Second World War. America became another site of intense sociological activity. [6] Euro-centrism was replaced by West-centrism.[7] Geography and the institutions representing 'sociology' have always played a combined role in the propagation of Western sociology as Sociology. Text books and dictionaries that are being prescribed as key works and reference materials in the West form an active part of our sociology curriculum.

Perhaps this is the right place to explore some key texts produced by the Western world. Let me begin with a dictionary. After all, a

dictionary is the repository of accepted concepts and their corresponding definitions or meanings, which control and direct attention.[8] Hence a dictionary of sociology is inevitably a statement of what the discipline is and how it should develop and consolidate (Abercrombie et al. 1984: vii). It is also part of a disciplinary process, a technology of power within a particular mode of sociological discourse. It will introduce the reader into the subject of a particular discourse of sociology. Such a process immediately excludes[9] vast conceptual territories from one's attention.

A popular dictionary will offer us a window to the way Western sociology is presented to the world. An excellent example is *Collins Dictionary of Sociology* (1991). In this dictionary one would find terms like 'British Sociology' (Ibid.: 53) 'U. S. Sociologists' (Ibid.: 402), but never 'African Sociology' or 'Indian Sociologist'.[10] In the discussion on caste in India, certain key concepts are mentioned without naming the contributions. The dictionary does not make entry of such concepts like sanskritisation. It is there as part of a discussion on caste. A description of the emergence of a journal such as *History Workshop Journal* (Ibid.: 280) is given an entry but excludes some reputed journals from India. Similarly, the Tel Quel Group (Ibid.: 654) is mentioned but not the Subaltern School. The growing presence of Islamic Sociology is not to be found in the dictionary. Many students in these parts of the world use CDS as a dictionary of sociology. What will the dictionary make of the readers?

I will take two books for cursory examination. One is the recent revised edition of Anthony Giddens' (1993) massive book, *Sociology*, published in Britain. This practice of naming is itself interesting and revealing. Chapter 22 of the book is devoted to *The Development of Sociological Theory.* A sub-section under this topic entitled 'Early Origins' presents as a matter of fact only European sociologists, like Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx and Max Weber. There is absolutely no mention at all of inputs from other civilizations. The fact that Auguste Comte is the founder of Sociology is taken for granted and therefore unchallengeable. It is an important statement on the nature of power relations.

This is indeed surprising considering that Giddens is sensitive to recent developments in the discipline and explores new topics, concepts

and theories. His book has sections on everyday life, gender and sexuality, globalization, ageing, space-time analysis, discourse theory and the like. In spite of this, Giddens has not taken any care to introduce developments in Sociology in the non-Western parts of the world. Elsewhere he maintains that:

> Although the selections are weighted towards the study of Britain . . . the emphasis throughout is upon the global nature of sociological thought today. Consequently, the selections are not insular, but offer a broad coverage of developments affecting the industrialised societies in general (Giddens 1992: 1).

He also proceeds to caution us:

> Globalizing influences do not work exclusively towards integration. Although there are some fundamental respects in which a planetary social order has been created, globalization also divides, marginalizes and excludes (Ibid.: 2).

It is this exclusion that we see visible in Gidden's selection of readings in *Human Societies*. While maintaining that he has chosen his selections to 'focus directly upon the Third World or trace out First World-Third World relationships' (Ibid.: 2) one can hardly find a kind of selection comparable to, say, Hamsa Alavi and Theodar Shanin's collection of readings entitled, *Sociology of Developing Societies*.[11] Would Giddens have really missed important contributions from Asia had he really looked hard enough?

The other book is an American one by Etzkowitz and Glassman, *The Renascence of Sociological Theory* (1991). Nomenclature again plays an important role here. The construction of sociology is European (French, Britian and German) and American. Nothing at all appears on the contributions made by those from Latin America, Africa and Asia. The renascence does not touch our academia or our scholars.

Thus, Western text books present Western sociology as Sociology. Development in sociological thought in our parts of the world is 'invisible' or is a side-show. This arrogance is also visible in the statement:

> In fact, sociology as a self-conscious, organised and independent discipline is well established. In order to establish the credentials of sociology, there is no need to trace the subject back to Aristotle or to the Islamic historian and legal theorist, Ibn Khaldun. The term 'sociology' was first systematically used in its modern sense in 1824 by the French writer Auguste Comte and came into wide circulation in his *Cours de Philosophie Positive* in 1838, replacing the older term 'physique sociale' (Abercrombie et al. 1984: vii).

The authors of this categorical statement are highly rated sociologists. The vast 'cultural capital' they command gives them the power to present a particular discourse of sociology as Sociology and to disqualify Ibn Khaldun and other non-Western thinkers.

In the West, there are also voices that speak a different language. George Ritzer (1992: 8), a professor of sociology at the University of Maryland, observes:

> There is a tendency to think of sociology as exclusively a comparatively modern, Western phenomenon. In fact, however, scholars were doing sociology long ago and in other parts of the world. One example is Abdel Rahman Ibn Khaldun [emphasis mine].

Thematic Sites of Contestation

The above exposition offers us directly and indirectly some resources for articulating the notion of contestation over the production of sociological knowledge. We can think about contestation as occurring on two interconnected fronts: thematic and institutional. Thematic contestation indicates a specific subject area of struggle for re-presentation. The struggle itself will have to take place within an institutional setting. An institutional site is the locus of concentrated contestation. Thematic contestation constitutes a number of simple and complex subject areas:

(a) Who is the 'real' founder of sociology?
(b) Is the Enlightenment Movement absolutely necessary or is it incidental to the development of sociology?
(c) What possible role can dictionaries/reference resources/text

books play in the perception, production and dissemination of sociological knowledge?

(d) What is the importance of (sociological) classics? How do we identify the appropriate classics?

(e) From which tradition(s) should Sociology draw upon to develop its methodology?

(f) Should the 'practice of sociology' necessarily be termed 'Sociology' or can it have any other name such as '*Ilm Al-Imran/Umran*' (Ibn Khaldun)?

The separation of sociology from identification with 'Western Sociology' is crucial for developing a non-Western sociological discourse. The separation can be secured with the maturation of the multi-faceted thematic contestation enumerated above which can occur at different institutional sites in different concentrations and at different rates.

Recognising Context, Culture and Civilization

In harvesting the growing disenchantment with Western knowledge, perhaps one critical area that we need to be sensitive about is the internal critique of (Western) knowledge. Though we can trace such a critique to the work of Karl Marx, it is with Karl Mannheim that the trajectory takes relevant direction and form.

Let us consider the debate on sociology of knowledge. The social determination of knowledge is in no sense new in the Western social sciences. The recognition that knowledge is social began with Karl Marx. In his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844, Marx observed that social consciousness is constituted by social being. Taking up this theme Karl Mannheim, in his paper entitled 'Competition as a Cultural Phenomena', at the Sixth Congress of German Sociologists in Zurich in 1928, argued that:

> Certain items of knowledge are incapable of an absolute interpretation and formulation does not mean that they are arbitrary and subjective, but only that they are a function of a particular viewpoint or perspective; that is to say, that certain qualitative features of an object encountered in the living process of history are

> accessible only to minds of a certain structure. There are certain qualitatively distinguished features of historically existing objects that are open to perception only by a consciousness as formed and devised by particular historical circumstances. This idea of the 'existential relativity' of certain knowledge–which the phenomenological school, along with a few others is now developing with increasing clarity–is far from implying a relativism under which everybody and nobody is right; what it implies is rather a relationism which says that certain (qualitative) truths cannot even be grasped, or formulated, except in the framework of an existential correlation between subject and object. This means, in our context, that certain insights concerning some qualitative aspect of the living process of history are available to consciousness only as formed by certain historical and social circumstances, so that the historico-social formation of the thinking and knowing subject assumes epistemological importance (Mannheim 1990: 55-56).

In the debates occurring among theorists in the West, the sociology of knowledge angle was severely criticised on the ground that it relativised knowledge by making it dependent on social contingencies. To overcome this relativism, sociology of knowledge has now devalued its emphasis on epistemology and replaced it with the triangular theory of modes of discourse:

> A substantially revised and 'radicalised' sociology of knowledge must be conscious of the dilemma posed by the triangle of modes of discourse. As a particular form of knowledge about knowledge, it depends simultaneously on explicit or implicit epistemological, sociological and ethical perspectives . . . . Epistemological issues, sociological questions and moral principles are intertwined at both substantive and meta-theoretical levels of discourse. This means that a particular tradition, although it may claim to be merely epistemological, has definite moral and sociological presuppositions and implications. Thus, *to advance an epistemological position implies advocacy of a specific ethical principle and a sociological vision* (Mannheim 1990: 295) [emphasis mine].

Notwithstanding these debates, the fact remains that social knowledge is governed by the social conditions and there is no way out of that. Hence, Foucault (1991: 142) argues that:

> A discipline is not the sum total of all the truths that may be uttered concerning something; it is not even the total of all that may be accepted, by virtue of some principle of coherence and systematisation, concerning some given fact or proposition. Medicine does not consist of all that may be truly said about disease; botany cannot be defined by the sum total of the truths one could say about plants. There are two reasons for this, the first being that botany and medicine, like other disciplines, consists of errors as well as truths, errors that are in no way residuals, or foreign bodies, but having their own positive functions and their own valid history, such that their roles are often indissociable from that of the truths. The other reason is that, for a proposition to belong to botany or pathology, it must fulfil certain condition, in a stricter and more complex sense than that of pure and simple truth. [Disciplines] constitute a system of control in the production of discourse, fixing its limits through the action of an identity taking form of a permanent reactivation of the rules.

The shift in thinking between Mannheim and Foucault spanning an exciting phase of European social thought can be seen as one in which language that was seen as a practice which merely mapped the external world was effectively challenged. In the new view, language was seen as a practice that represented–not mapped–an external world. The world out there is actively produced and distributed by its human re-presentation. The reality of representation–and a crisis in it–soon gripped the Western academic world, breaking down a theory of knowledge based on foundationalism. There are many faces and phases of this phenomenon including Foucault's pathbreaking contribution. Discourse analysis emerging out of Foucault's concerns offered a new pathway for being Other-sensitive. As Norman Fairclough (1992: 41-42) observes:

> What is of major significance . . . for discourse analysis is the view of discourse as constitutive–as contributing to the production,

> transformation, and reproduction of the objects . . . of social life. This entails that discourse is in an active relation to reality, that language signifies reality in the sense of constructing meaning for it, rather than that discourse is in a passive relation to reality, with language merely referring to objects which are taken to be given in reality.

Discourse is a complex concept. It is sufficient here to note that it is a species of representation (of a subject or topic) in which power is implicated. Power circulates within discourse and produces a 'regime of truth'. Whether a discourse is true or not is hardly the matter. Similarly, Sociology as it is being promoted by Western sociologists and major multi-national publishers is a representation maintained by subtle power relations forming part of the Western sociological discourse. If seen in this way, Western sociology as a discourse also becomes a site of contestation and of alternative discourses.

Such contestation has been facilitated by the past modernist trends in the West. In 1977, the President of the Conseil des Universites of the Government of Quebec asked one of France's premier philosophers, Jean-Francois Lyotard, to construct a report on the (current) state of knowledge in the advanced (Western) societies. In response, Lyotard published *La Condition Postmoderne (The Post-Modern Condition).* In the introduction, Lyotard (1979: 1) observes:

> The object of this study is the condition of knowledge in the most highly developed societies. I have decided to use the word post-modern to describe that condition . . . . Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; *it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable* [emphasis mine].

Hence an intrnal critique of Western knowledge following the trajectory of sociology of knowledge, discourse analysis and post-modernism makes it impossible to hold on to the Western representation/ construction of sociology as Sociology. Nor is it decisively important to recognise the issue of a historical specificity, for example the enlightenment movement, in the genesis of Sociology. The practice of Sociology was already there in some form or other in many civilizational

contexts/societies. We have to discard the historically-specific linkage between Sociology and its Western classical[12] and philosophical foundation.[13] It is important to note in this connection the following observations of a Western writer:

> 'Our' perspective on history is strongly shaped by nineteenth-century views. This was the formative period of disciplines such as archaeology, art history, philology, sociology and anthropology, as well as the gestation period of European narcissism and imperialism. Because of the shadow cast by the nineteenth-century regime of truth, we forget, we structurally overlook the ways in which Europe in its development has been standing on the shoulders of the other cultures. Nineteenth-century historiography is a historiography drunk with the superiority of 'European civilization'. Its regime of truth only acknowledged the usual stations of Europe—Greece, Rome, Christianity, Renaissance, Enlightenment (Pieterse 1994: 130).

But even before this critique became available, a self-conscious Indian sociology was thirsting for an identity of its own linked to Indian tradition. This intellectual movement was at the same time also aware of the need to maintain some sort of linkage with Western sociology (Mohan 1945: 423-38). Though the debate is by no means concluded, new areas of inquiry not directly involved with it have thrown up indigenous categories, concepts and theories.[14]

Supplementing such trends have been studies which are directly or indirectly influenced by the internal critique of Western knowledge. In 1995, a journal titled *Sojourn*, published by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, sought to address the relationship between 'Post-modernism' and 'Southeast Asian Scholarship' and the possibility of developing 'authentic' knowledge sensitive to local cultural and political realities[15]

These developments allow us to carefully nurture sociological methodologies that are tradition-specific. There are, however, other faces of the contestation as in the case of what has come to be recognised as 'Islamic sociology'.

Civilizations and Counter-Sociological Discourses: The Case of Islamic Sociology

As mentioned before, there have been some attempts to develop civilization-specific discourses in Latin America, Africa and Asia, in view of the fact that 'the universality of the conceptual apparatus of the [western] social sciences is now [really] in question' (Abdul Malik 1981: 26, 144-45). Anour Abdel-Malek presents his case in terms of civilization. A methodology that uses 'civilization' as its central concept is by no means a well developed one and needs elaboration but is beyond the scope of this paper. However, some of the areas that need consideration in order to shape such a methodology are:

a) What is a civilization? 'Civilization is social order promoting cultural creation. Four elements constitute it: economic provision, political organisation, moral traditions and the pursuit of knowledge and the arts (Durant 1954: 1).
b) Civilizations give rise to three internal structural 'movements'—universalism, segmentation and dialogism (Nadarajah: 1993). Though civilizations are culturally specific and incommensurable, there is dialogue and contact.
c) While it is true that there is socio-cultural hybridity due to civilizational contact, it is necessary to recognise the reality of a plural socio-cultural world.
d) Civilizations have their own traditions which are usually available in some textual form. It is therefore necessary to develop strategies that allow active engagement with one's own intellectual tradition particularly in the construction of theory. This presupposes a frontal theoretical and political action against all forms of colonialism. It requires the careful adoption of 'discourse analysis'.
e) Ethnography (Hammersley 1990-1992) needs to be critically developed and used. It presupposes the reality of a multiple socio-cultural world and allows a 'view' from within a civilization. The emphasis should be on understanding the logic of re-presentation both of Self and the Other and not just an emphasis on the understanding the Other.
f) Cross-cultural translation needs to be 'problematised' to overcome

> the problem of incommensurabilty. A view obtained through ethnography needs to be taken across–translated–for effective and meaningful civilizational dialogue.

In this effort, we will be confronted with the realities of difference and specificity as well as of universality. But universality should never become the ground to homogenise but only a ground to offer the possibility of dialogue between basically different social segments. Sociological discourses must address these realities and offer a way for us to think about diversity beyond universalism, relativity and developmentalism (Schweder 1986; 1988).

Sociological knowledge produced in the West and disseminated by multi-national publishers for world consumption must consequently be questioned. Today we see a 'civilizational' contest of this in the form of Islamic sociology.[15] This contestation concerns the founder of sociology and the practice of sociology. The development of post-modernism in the West and Islamic revivalism have made this contestation possible.

At the heart of the revivalist world view is the belief that the Muslim world is in a state of decline due to deviation from the straight path of Islam. Its cure is perceived as a return to Islam in personal and public life. For Islamic political activists Islam is a total or comprehensive way of life as stipulated in the *Quran*, God's revelation, mirrored in the example of Muhammed and the nature of the first Muslim community-state, and embodied in the comprehensive nature of the Sharia, God's revealed law. Thus the revitalisation of Muslim governments and societies requires the re-implementation of Islamic law, the blueprint for an Islamically guided and socially just state and society. While Westernisation and secularisation are condemned, modernisation as such is not (Esposito 1992: 19).

The emphasis on the various aspects of Islam has generated many spin offs, one being the careful exploration and revelation of the advances made in what we have come to understand as the sciences–social and natural. The presentation of Islamic sociology to the world is really a complex response and should not be reduced to a mere response to the Western domination in sociology. The development of Islamic sociology is a component of the Islamic (civilizational) identity.

This is the right place to introduce two important thinkers now being

presented to the world. First is the Islamic sociologist, Al-Beruni (1983) (or Al-Biruni). Al-Beruni was born in AD 973 and was a Muslim of Iranian origin. Almost a thousand years before Western sociologists/ anthropologists such as Louis Dumont or Adrian Meyer studied India, Al-Beruni had already exhaustively studied it. He spent 13 years of his life in 'India', that is, from AD 1017 to 1031 to write and publish a book called *Kitab Al-Hind*, a key text in the early construction of the Indo-Islamic world. Al-Beruni in his preface shares the following with the reader.

> No one will deny that in question of authenticity, hearsay does not equal eye-witness; for in the eye of the observer apprehends the substance of that which is observed, both in the time when and in the place where it exists, whilst hearsay has its drawbacks.
> This book is not a polemical one. I shall not produce the arguments of our antagonist in order to refute such of them as I believe to be in the wrong. My book is nothing but *a simple historic record of facts*. I shall place before the reader the theories of the Hindus exactly as they are, and I shall mention in connection with them similar theories of the Greeks in order to show the relationship existing between them (Al-Biruni 1983: 6, emphasis in the original).

What more evidence do we need to show the world that here was a scholar who was using methods presented to us as products of the European Enlightenment movement. The titles of some of the chapters in Al-Beruni's book are very revealing: 'On the different classes of created beings, and on the their names'; 'On the castes, called "colours" (*varna*) and on the classes below them'; 'About the beginnings of Idol-worship, and a Description of the individual idols'; 'Their grammatical and metrical literature'.

The list goes on. It will suffice here to say that this is surely a work of a sociologist. Let us now turn to the other illustrious sociologist, Ibn Khaldun. According to Akbar S. Ahmad:

> Arab narrative and interpretative history culminated in the work of Ibn Khaldun. He was jurist, historian, scholar, traveller and

> statesman, and for us today, the father of sociology, to which he gave the name Ilm al-Imran, the science of society. Some of the central formulae of the modern age are reflected in Ibn Khaldun's theories; Karl Marx's stages of human history which provide the dynamics for the dialectics of conflict between groups; Max Weber's typology of leadership; Vilfredo Pareto's circulation of elites; Ernest Gellner's pendulum swing theory of Islam, oscillating from an urban, formal, literate tradition to a rural, informal and mystical one (1988: 101).

In his very elaborate chapter on Ibn Khaldun, Saleh Faghizadeh (1988: 267) notes that:

> According to Ibn Khaldun, in sociology we should not be ethnocentric, that is, judging the world and all the people in it from the narrow perspective of one's own tribe, social group, hometown, or country. People should not think that their ways, customs, and beliefs are the only worthwhile ones, and that all other people must be judged by the single standard of themselves. Science of sociology (*Ilm-al-Umran*) is culturally relativistic because the sociological perspective takes belief, customs, and ways of life as data to be analysed, not as errors to be condemned.
>
> For Ibn Khaldun the first source of data in sociology (*Ilm-al-Umran*) is direct observation of events. He believed that scientific research requires accurate observation, logical and objective methods, gathering data from the present and past; careful recording, and (5) the courage of careful description and reporting.

The above exposition shows that non-Western sociological discourses are not only possible but 'classics' which are part of the textual universe of these discourses are already available (Khaldun 1958).

Problematising the Location of Ibn Khaldun

How do we locate Ibn Khaldun in sociological discourse?

Salleh Faghirzadeh has made an attempt to locate Ibn Khaldun in the period before, but along with the other European thinkers (Enlightenment and others). By this act he intends to correct a historical

error. But by placing him among the Western thinkers, he may eventually be absorbed as a part of the Western sociological discourse.

It may be important to locate Ibn Khaldun by making him a central proponent of the Islamic civilizational contestation and a key figure in the development of Islamic sociological discourse, quite independent of the Western one. It is perhaps important to sharpen this discourse 'before' allowing for inter-discourse dialogue. A dialogue between the Self and the Other cannot take place without articulate re-presentation of the Self and Other.

More importantly, it is a contestation that is hinged on the fact that the practice of sociology is possible in a non-Western context and it has really nothing to do with Enlightenment as such. The relationship between sociology and post-Enlightenment phase is a specific historical context and not a necessary condition for the genesis of the practice of sociology. Non-Western sociologists should only recognise the fact that the post-Enlightenment phase has made some very definite contribution to the development of the practice of sociology which is now available to people around the world.

With these cautionary remarks, it is necessary to build a typology of discourses so that it eventually makes it into the sociology curriculum of the universities in our parts of the world. We need new text books and dictionaries. Western writers who command greater institutional power in this matter perhaps should write text books like the series now being edited by Stuart Hall.

Teaching Sociology: Three Possible Sociological Discourses

1. The production of sociological knowledge can be qualitatively changed with a sociological curriculum helping the multi-facted contestation of Western sociological knowledge. The idea is to help in cultivating contestation and allowing the maturation of the contested themes.
2. Without the proper development of institutional sites such as universities, research bodies, foundations promoting social science and publishers, the liberating ruptures promised in the contested themes will hardly be achieved.
3. Colonialism intervened in the life of many non-Western civilizations/societies, thus creating a complex institutional site to

> produce and to disseminate a West-based conceptual reality and a stream of consciousness. They have come to mediate between the past and the present of the formerly colonized people. Much of the Western discourse promoted by colonial intervention needs to be unlearnt or modified. The 'old' conceptual territories must be recovered and 'new or hybrid' ones have to be identified and named. This 'semiotic activism', an essential component of counter-discourse, will help civilizations recover their own socio-cultural realities. [16]

Three possible sociological discourses can be developed for inclusion into the sociological curricula:

A. The Western Sociological Discourse
   —Intellectual Position: Post-Enlightenment Western Project
   —Institutional Sites: Universities, Multi-national Publishers, Research Institutions and Funding Agencies
B. The Islamic Sociological Discourse
   —Intellectual Position: Islamic Sociology (Ibn Khaldunic sociology)
   —Institutional Sites: Islamic Universities, Islamic Research Institutions, Islamic Government Funding
C. The Civilizational Sociological Discourse
   —Intellectual Position: Civilization-Based (Multiple Starting points/Multiple Histories)

Institutional Sites: Presently Negligible

Of these three kinds of discourses 'C' offers a democratic advantage. It is a comprehensive position that can, for instance, situate Islamic, Chinese and Indian civiliziational sociologies. It thus broadly offers a place to alternative Western 'non-Western' sociological discourses. The B-discourse position in sociology may in its ascendence exhibit the characteristics of what is felt today about the hegemonic Western sociological discourse, that is, the A-position.

Conclusion

The above discussion is an attempt to re-think the teaching of sociology particularly in our parts of the world. There is much we can learn from the Islamic sociological discourse that is slowly growing as a counter-discourse and a direct contest of the construction of Western sociology as Sociology. Perhaps this is the right time to resume the 'Indian Sociology' debate. Hopefully this will result in the concentration of contested themes and in the recovery of key Indian socio-cultural realities and textual traditions, traditions that have remained or continue to remain an excluded part of hegemonic Western sociology–or at its margins. Perhaps what really needs to be done now is to reconsider not only the content of social science education in our universities but also the methodology used in the production of such knowledge. Importantly and specifically, we need to be academically and politically active to influence the development of a 'new' sociological curriculum.

NOTES

1. In his 29th film 'Rhapsody in August', the world famous Japanese film maker, Akira Kurosawa brings alive the the terrible images from August 9th, 1945 through an old person and her four grandchildren. The actual pain suffered by a generation of older Japanese people becomes the memory of pain for the younger generation. The re-presentation of the mushroom cloud as a frightening, piercing eye in the sky looking at what it had set out to destroy is an excellent representation of 'organic' brutality internal to Western instrumental rationality.
2. This 'our' is used quite uneasily. I do not want to sound sectarian or subjective. It is merely to indicate an aspect of human experience that has been submerged or marginalised and that which needs to be drawn to the centrestage. The effort is thus inevitably sociological and political.
3. Gumah and Scott (1992) provide an interesting related argument. The tendency is also seen in certain forms of structuralist thought.
4. The 'attack' is from both social scientists and natural/physical scientists, see, for instance, Sardar (1988).
5. It is part of the same narcissism that has engulfed Western historians who claim that Amerigo Vespucci discovered America.
6. An interesting section on the history of Sociology in America is found in Erzkowitz and Glamman (1991); see also Turner and Turner (1990).
7. For this observation see Abdel-Malek (1981: 144).
8. For similar ideas, see Day (1990: 1-12).
9. Exclusion does not necessarily mean ignorance of other cultural territories.
10. Other dictionaries also provide a similar picture. See Lackman (1991) and Mitchell (1968).
11. Though this is a different kind of series emphasizing on the developing societies, what is really important here is the principle of selection and clarification which is an important technique of exclusion; see Foucault (1991).

12. For the centrality of class see Alexander (1987). Expectedly the discussion is located within the Western context.
13. Local intellectual traditions in the developing world can contribute to knowledge production. See the section on *'Ashtadhyayi*: The Paradigm Example of Theory construction in India', in Srinivas (1988: 261-89); see also Daya Krishna (1987; 1996).
14. See Lynch (1990) for a creative articulation of the 'Indian Theory of Emotion'.
15. With the kind of development we have achieved in the social sciences, we can contest Western knowledge from three civilizational contexts, Islamic, Chinese and Indian.
16. I thank my friend 'PP' for pointing out the dangers involved in this kind of effort. After all, reactionary rightist forces are also attempting a similar kind of intellectual undertaking. While recognising the danger, I think the overall nature and direction of the methodological effort attempted here needs to be kept in mind.

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Announcement 3

33rd World Congress of the International Institute of Sociology

The 33rd World Congress of the International Institute of Sociology will be held during July 7-11, 1997 at the University of Cologne, Germany. For details write to:

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Book Reviews

Amita Baviskar. 1995. *In the Belly of the River: Tribal Conflicts Over Development in the Narmada Valley*. Delhi: Oxford University Press. Pp. xvi + 286. Rs 475.

This is the most scholarly of the books that have emerged in response to the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP). The study is based on fieldwork among the Bhilala adivasis in the Narmada valley, many of whom face displacement because of the SSP. It addresses some important issues in regard to the understanding and analysis of natural resource struggles and 'environmental' movements and is a welcome contribution to the discourse on development and environment. The strength of the book lies in a clear presentation of arguments and its high readability, as portions from the 'field diary' are interspersed with the narration in the first few chapters.

The author herself acknowledges that 'all texts are vulnerable to be disputed and discredited' (p. 11); a scholarly text all the more so. By its very nature, it invites a critical gaze and hence its flaws and weaknesses are sharply etched. If by highlighting some of the flaws, this review is 'overrating the importance' (p. 11) of the text, then one of the purposes of this review is achieved; the book is too important to be given only a cursory reading.

The central theme of the book is the need to move beyond the development-resistance dichotomy as an analytical approach for understanding people's struggles and protest. This approach, according to the author, suppresses the multi-dimensional politics in which adivasis are engaged. Politics is not always against development and everyday practices of the people are not necessarily ecologically sustainable. Thus to indulge in this dichotomy, as much of the scholarly writing does, is to gloss over the experiential reality of the adivasi world, and to end up 'reifying the grassroots' (p. 228).

The ten chapters in the book are varied in character, each one taking the reader along a different tangent. The two introductory chapters deal with theoretical and methodological questions. The critical relationship

between ideology and methods and between research and the researcher are explored. Particularly interesting are the arguments in favour of action-oriented research as against the quietism of the academic, and the stress on the attitude of reciprocity required of a researcher during the research process (the author was a teacher for sometime in the village during her fieldwork). The preference for critical inquiry over positivism sets the orientation of this research.

The second chapter, titled 'National Development, Poverty and Environment', is a brave effort to encompass all possible relevant issues. The author makes rapid forays into global environmental problems, poverty in India, the Gandhi-Nehru debate on the trajectory of development, the political economy of large irrigation projects, the class character of the Indian state, ecological Marxism, new social movements and other such issues. This gives the chapter a comprehensive look, yet there are some important omissions and obvious flaws. Surprisingly Bina Agarwal's substantial contributions to the debate on environment and development are overlooked. Similarly, only one of Vandana Shiva's contributions, that too a co-authored article in an edited book, is mentioned; her classics are completely ignored. The latter omission is glaring in view of the fact Shiva's theoretical framework serves as the point of departure for the author in elaborating and critically analysing the development-resistance dichotomy (pp. 45, 240). This chapter is loaded with simplistic statements, as, for instance, in the conclusion drawn by comparing the economic rates of large and small irrigation projects (p. 27). The author seems to be unaware of the fact that about half of the investment in small irrigation projects is private in nature; hence, calculating returns on investment and costs per hectare from public investments alone will lead to erroneous conclusions. The author's theoretical framework in the rest of the chapter draws heavily on Ramachandra Guha's works. Guha's distinction between first world and third world environmentalisms and his three-fold classification of contending ideological streams within the Indian environmental movement for example, deep ecology Gandhians, ecological Marxist and alternative technology fans–form the foundations of the framework. In elaborating ecological Marxism and environmental theories, Baviskar regards indigenous people's movements which resist 'development' as 'non-party political formations'. The author's research hypothesis that

the adivasis' resistance to development is politics based on their traditional values is partial. It tests only the assumption that indigenous people/adivasis are pillars of resistance to development by virtue of their tradition of sustainable living. Quite predictably, the lessons learnt from ecological Marxism, that is, the importance to be accorded to material interests and survival needs apart from value systems, and from social movement theories stressing the mediating role of outside agents, are set aside. These issues then reappear as the findings of the thesis.

Chapter 3, which provides a 'general history of the region' (p. 51) is informative, although a purist may consider the historiography weak, given the nature of its sources. Although the introduction promises a 'bottom-up perspective: a focus on the ways in which adivasis regard the state' (p. 3), the sources used reflect the state's representation of the adivasis, and not the other way round. Chapter 4, 'Bhilalas: Caste or Tribe', revisits the now classic debate in Indian anthropology on Indian tribes and their locus standi *vis-a-vis* caste Hindus. Here, the author attempts to locate the existential complexities of the Bhilalas, who adopt Hindu ways while simultaneously retaining (and creating a fact that the author ignores) their own cultural identity.

Chapter 5, 'Community and the Politics of Honour', deals with two major aspects of the Bhilala community. The first is the role of ceremonial exchange through the *laah*, a process of labour exchange. The author attempts to explain the economics and politics of the *laah* in the village by using Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital; households attempt to accumulate symbolic capital honour, prestige and goodwill and invest it in the gift economy when required. The calling of a *laah* is elucidated through some stray examples such as that of building a house or for carrying grain from the field to the house. The reader is left to assume, following Bourdieu, that this is primarily a labour recruitment and mobilization process for agriculture. But such questions as how frequently a *laah* is evoked, by which households and for what specific purposes–agricultural, non-farm or allied activities–are not answered. Instead, the author warns against ignoring the moral dimensions of the *laah* to avoid the 'trap of economism' (p. 125). Surely, if the *laah* is crucially linked to the production process, the economic dimensions could have been more fully elaborated without running the risk of

'economism'. For, moral economies are first and foremost functioning economies.

The second aspect of the Bhilala community dealt in Chapter 5 is an extension of the first: the domain of symbolic capital now shifts from the household to the clan. The author explains how the whole clan/village is mobilized when the honour/prestige of a clan/kin is at stake and how this often leads to feuds among the villages/clans. Into this overarching process, the author attempts to weave in intra-household politics, implying that the accumulation and use of symbolic capital is always a male prerogative. Thus, we see the politics around symbolic capital operating on three different terrains: the individual male, the household and the clan/village. A possible fourth arena beyond the clan level is not explored in this chapter. The author, however, brings this up in Chapter 8, although in a different context. There, it is argued that the construction of an adivasi identity is fostered only by outside activists who 'direct', 'divert' and 'channel' (p. 179) the fissured use (read abuse, as its use causes only feud) of the symbolic capital at the clan level to a wider political plane to foster an imagined community 'a nation of adivasis' (p. 179). We are then left to infer that, as adivasis, the Bhilalas and other groups could never have on their own invested in the encompassing symbolic capital of adivasi heritage, honour and dignity. Despite this drawback this chapter demonstrates quite ably the author's argument that the politics of the Bhilalas is not always against development.

Chapters 6 and 7 provide village-level ethnographic details on Bhilala economy and ecology, religion and rituals. We are told that (a) Bhilala economic practices are unsustainable; (b) this trait of unsustainability is the outcome of 'a history of economic and political subordination' (p. 137); and that (c) despite these practices, Bhilala rituals and beliefs revere nature and the surrounding ecology. The subsistence nature of the Bhilala's livelihood is demonstrated with specific reference to its heavy dependence on forests. The practice of *nevad*-cultivation of forest land in a way considered illegal by the state is well documented and its importance for the survival economy well argued. While one understands the difficulty of collecting quantitative household data on the amount of *nevad* holding in the village, the wide range of holding size per household from 12 acres to 70 acres should

have inspired an investigation of the rationale and mechanisms of *nevad* land distribution.

The unsustainable practices within the Bhilala economy notwithstanding, the author suggests that religious beliefs and rituals encode a reverence for nature, 'combined with deep knowledge of social relations and natural processes' (p. 168). While this may be true for most adivasi religion (even tenets of 'mainstream' Hindu rituals reveal such sensitivity), the author's proposition brings her uncomfortably close to the so-called 'indigenousites' like Vandana Shiva, whose paradigm she isolates for critical analysis. For scholars like Shiva, the value systems of traditional (read adivasi) societies are highly sensitive to the operations and limits of nature. Baviskar's thesis that such value systems are not transformed into a conservationist set of practices, should warn us against regarding the adivasis as the first ecologists *a la* Levi Strauss. It also amounts to misreading the complex reality of survival and subsistence in which the adivasi societies are embedded. The author is quite correct when she suggests the futility of 'automatically reading into the everyday experiences of adivasi life an ideology that is derived from an external critique of development' (p. 238).

Chapters 8 and 9 describe respectively the politics of the Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangath, an organization working among the adivasis in the Alirajpur district of Madhya Pradesh, and the Narmada Bachao Andolan opposing the Sardar Sarovar Project in Gujarat. The Bhilalas of Narmada Valley in general, and of the studied village of Anjanvara which will be submerged, are strongly associated with the politics of both these outfits. The Sangath, founded by a small group of outside activists, has done phenomenal work in the area in raising critical awareness on the exploits of the administration, the police and moneylenders, who in the Sangath's lexicon constitute the 'structure of exploitation'. The Sangath mobilization is directed at breaking this structure of exploitation. Perhaps most importantly, Sangath politics is geared towards developing not just an adivasi identity but also a self reliant adivasi leadership that can take over the activities of the 'outsider'. The discussion of the activities of the Sangath, in mediating resistance, attempting developmental works and of the dilemma that such groups face is indeed insightful. The glaring problem in this chapter, however, is the fact that only once the political voice of the

adivasi is heard and that too when he describes members of his community as a bunch of untrustworthy delinquents! The author overplays the role of the 'outside activists'. Her repeated classification of them all as *bazariaas*, an adivasi term to denote outsiders and possibly her attempt to see the world through the eyes of the adivasi effectively denies the adivasi even the capacity to differentiate the types of 'outsiders'.

The politics of the Narmada Bachao Andolan receives critical review. This is to be expected as the Andolan has invited upon itself the critical gaze of the scholar. Andolan politics has a much wider terrain than Sangath politics which has strong grassroots moorings. It includes at one end of the spectrum, local adivasis as well as non-adivasis, from the hills and from the plains, who face displacement. At the other end is the global network of NGOs and human rights and environmental groups. Since its inception in 1987, the Andolan's support base has widened considerably to include a diverse set of interest groups. To mobilize such a variety of groups, the movement has had to adopt diverse strategies, some of which have yielded successful results. Such success has made the Andolan a role model for people's organizations and movements in other parts of India.

The author contends that the rich complexity of the Andolan is derived from its multi-class, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural support base. Yet, according to her, the intelligentsia that support it have preferred to ignore this complexity. Instead, they prefer to represent the Andolan as constituting a 'theoretically satisfying challenge to the developmental state' (p. 227), an understanding that breeds the use of the 'development-resistance' dichotomy. For the author, the reality in the valley is much more ambiguous. Ordinary people who are affected by the project and who support the movement understand displacement in a 'particularistic way' (p. 222) and certainly do not think of large development projects as representing a process of industrialization and commercialization or of appropriating resources. Further, the term 'people', when disaggregated, has class dimensions that add to the ambiguity. All these are suppressed for a neat theoretical anti-development discourse within which a people's movement is pitched against the agents of (destructive, resource-intensive, elitist) 'development'.

A view more sympathetic than Baviskar's would consider the appropriation and representation of such a people's movements in the anti-development discourse as itself the outcome of doing research on such movements. In the specific context of the Narmada Valley, the intelligentsia, in its enthusiasm to support the struggle, could be accused of ignoring its ambiguities and fitting it into pre-existing but empirically grounded theoretical schema. Notwithstanding their richness, these two chapters, under-represent the adivasi point of view. We are told precious little about the Bhilala perception of the Sangath or of the Andolan and the politics around them. In trying to deconstruct a people's movement and discover its ambiguities, the book ends up denying agency to the adivasi, supposedly the main protagonist of the author's narrative. This is the major methodological flaw in this scholarly work.

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A. M. Shah, B. S. Baviskar and E. A. Ramaswamy (eds). 1996. *Social Structure and Change: Women in Indian Society*. New Delhi: Sage Publications. Pp. 214. Rs. 285.

The present volume forms part of a series of five volumes organized as a *festschrift* for Professor M. N. Srinivas. This volume is not only a tribute to Professor Srinivas for his seminal contribution to the development of gender studies but is also an acknowledgement of the fact to that women's issues cannot any longer be ignored in mainstream academics.

The three central issues raised in this volume relate to women's work, culture and women's education. Each of the seven essays included is rich in ethnographic/historical detail and marked by a clear theoretical understanding of the underpinnings of gender in the construction of social life. Hence a good case can be made for reworking the gender-blind domain assumptions that structure mainstream social science and the planning process in India. One such assumption is in regard to compartmentalisation of the public from the private sphere. Neera Desai writes that '. . . the world of work should not be separated from the

world of family life. In fact, there are occasions when the two worlds converge' (p.102). Karuna Chanana observes that the debate on women's education was 'directly linked to the conception of women's work as housewives and mothers' (p.114). Such a social perception is perhaps responsible for what Uma Ramaswamy sees as the inadequacy of 'conventional tools of various data-gathering agencies' which 'simply fail to capture' family labour and home-based production (p. 87). This conceptual blindness supported the view that 'the emancipation of women' is 'closely linked with their right to work'. Scarlett Epstein argues that this is an upper class view because it does not recognize that much of agricultural work that women are invisibly involved in is backbreaking (p. 38). Hence her attempt to explore what she terms as the cultural variables in the developmental process.

Women's studies worldwide have triggered off a rethinking of knowledge categories, and questioned the value neutrality of social sciences and their tendency towards the compartmentalization of separate disciplines. This volume is a worthy representation of such efforts in the Indian context.

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Ashis Nandy. 1994. *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self.* Delhi: Oxford University Press. Pp. 94. Rs. 125.

The counterposing of nationalism to colonialism in India has led to a convergence between nationalism, patriotism and anti-imperialism (p. 80). It is Nandy's contention that this convergence is specious and that all patriots or anti-imperialists were not nationalists. Interrogating the mirror-image nature of nationalism in regard to colonialism, Nandy indicates that nationalism was a restrictive political outlook which hardly addressed the socio-cultural ramifications of colonialism. In his *The Intimate Enemy* (1983: ix) he had maintained that, 'Modern colonialism won its great victories not so much through its military and

technological powers as through its ability to create secular hierarchies incompatible with the traditional order. These hierarchies opened new vistas for many, particularly for those exploited or cornered within the traditional order. To them the new order looked like–and here lay its psychological pull–the first step towards a more just and equal world.' Consequently an amoral, homogenised, yet hierarchical social order under the nationalist aegis gained widespread legitimacy. To this new nationalist discourse Nandy poses a dissenting tradition which while adhering to anti-imperialism discounts nationalism as the alternative.

Both Gandhi and Tagore, according to Nandy, fall within this anti-imperialist tradition. Notwithstanding their intractable opposition to British colonialism, they were not mere nationalists. While Gandhi evolved a severe critique of nationalism, Tagore opted for a cultural universalism which transcended the boundaries of the nation. As Nandy puts it, 'They saw themselves as belonging to a civilization that refused to view politics only as a secularized arena of human initiative' (p. 85). Located within a civilizational order, they did not delink politics from culture and society. For, in their scheme of things, morality and civilization were the driving forces of change.

In the work under review Nandy explores Tagore's political ideology through a reading of three of his novels, *Chare Baire* (The Home and the World), *Gora* and *Char Adhyay* (Four Chapters). These novels trace Tagore's understanding of nationalism and can be read as his political statements. In them Nandy seeks to recover the dialogue which Tagore carried on with his nationalist 'double' (i.e., Brahmabandhab Upadhyay) and the critique that he developed of nationalism as the telos of India's modernity.

The chief protagonists in all the three novels–Bimala, Gora and Atin –are attracted to the nationalist movement. But this engagement leads to a loss of the 'self' whereby they unwittingly overstep themselves. The ambivalence they encounter imbibes in them a sense of fragmentation characteristic of the modern nationalist. Their transgression of *swavabh* and *swadharma* are brought home to them by the embedded traditionalists like Anandamoyi (Gora's mother), Nikhil's grandmother and Pareshbabu (*Char Adhyay*, p. 47). These traditionalists are 'committed to their traditions and to the victims as living, suffering, real human beings rather than as categories in an abstract ideology of dissent'

(p. 47). Being more in 'touch with traditions . . . [they] are more open to the new and the exogenous'. They exemplify 'the inner strengths of the Indian tradition far better than those aggressively defending the tradition' (p. 47).

By examining Tagore's works, Nandy unravels the dubious conjoining of nationalism, patriotism and anti-imperialism. In nationalism he discerns an imposed modernity which 'attempt to mould the Indian concept of the public realm to the requirement of standardized western categories' (p. 89). Nandy's search for patriotic dissenters is to enunciate the non-duality of tradition and modernity, for they are interdependent, not disparate or antithetical. In this moral universe of the self in transition there is a supercession of the fragmentation, but is there a place for the fragment?

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B. S. Baviskar and Donald W. Attwood. 1995. *Finding the Middle Path: The Political Economy of Cooperation in Rural India.* Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press. Pp. 437. $ 69. 95

Baviskar and Attwood are scholars with deep professional and human interest in the role and efficacy of the cooperative sector in India's economy. The book under review mirrors the maturation of their individual and joint search of many years for the actual role of cooperatives in ensuring effectiveness of rural economic enterprise and the well-being of ordinary entrepreneurs and workers. The book is based on a collaborative research project initiated in 1983. Also remarkable is their exemplary gesture of putting the names of their eleven co-researchers on the title page, virtually acknowledging them as co-authors.

The book begins with an overview of the value of cooperatives in the present world. Cooperatives are viewed as a means of economic democratization offering scope for local initiatives, skills, creativity, involvement and control. Cooperative enterprise the world over is promoted and supported on this premise, while at the same time ensuring

sound economic returns for those who cooperate. However, the cumulative experience on the performance of cooperatives is a mixed bag. The central question raised by the main authors is: why do cooperatives vary in their economic performance and fulfilment of the interests of their main stockholders? This question constitutes the connecting thread for the spectrum of case studies included in the book.

The researchers have wisely stayed away from examining the relative success of specific cooperative enterprises. The subject of study therefore is the success of the cooperative sector in the wider socio-economic context. It is known that cooperatives have been eminently more successful in western India than in the other regions. Scholars have explored this regional variation. They go beyond the 'folk explanations' fondly adduced by informed citizens and observers in terms of resources, management and leadership. The success of cooperatives in a region is measured in terms of the following four criteria: the number of cooperatives, variety of sectors covered, durability and viability.

The core group of researchers had formulated a set of nine hypotheses for the success of cooperatives at the initial stage of the study on the basis of their previous experience. The success of cooperatives is related to social, economic, political and organizational forces both within and outside the cooperative system. The hypotheses were discussed at a workshop in 1985 where the researchers evolved a broad framework for the study and also reinforced their intellectual freedom to design individual studies. This process of academic collaboration is described in the second chapter.

The next chapter examines the widely acclaimed success of cooperatives in Maharashtra and Gujarat. The information served by the authors leads us well beyond folk explanations. We can easily understand that the commendable performance of cooperatives in western India is a result of interactive socio-historical, political, technological, economic, organizational and managerial forces. The following two chapters present the state of cooperatives in West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala which provide a contrast to the situation in western India. These regions, unlike their western counterpart, lack middle-caste peasants and the resulting advantage of numbers, political clout, economic security, material

resources and a culture of collaborative entrepreneurship. The local governments play a dominating and interventionist role rather than supporting cooperative institutions as a means of rural socio-economic development in these regions. Cooperatives, hence, tend to be burdened by political and bureaucratic vested interests.

The concluding chapter of the analytical part of the book summarizes the essence of the authors' findings in two comprehensive statements. One, the performance of cooperatives depends crucially on the political economy of a region. Two, cooperatives cannot function well unless they are free of political and bureaucratic interference. This means you cannot hope to achieve results by standard economic, legal and managerial interventions. The authors re-state their original hypotheses in a sharper focus in the light of their analysis. They then raise the question about the ubiquity of state control in spite of its gross ineffectiveness. Among the reasons for such control, it is stated that the Brahmanical tradition looks upon economic activity with contempt and suspicion. Such an explanation perhaps amounts to begging the question. The impact of Brahmanism on the vortex of Indian political economy continues to evade modelling by sociological theory. But the authors go on to underscore the more perceptible factors such as the economic or political vested interest in state control on the part of political elites and educated middle classes. Those who understand the evil effects of state control also need it more than others. The authors finally suggest a set of comprehensive guidelines for optimization of the performance of cooperatives in terms of why they should exist in India today. One hopes these guidelines will stir the minds and action of the various stockholders in cooperatives and their combinations.

The main analytical part of the book is followed by case studies which provide the empirical base for the book. The case studies include four from Maharashtra, three from Gujarat and five from other states. The cases offer a sweet-and-sour view of the Indian cooperative labyrinth. They help us to learn how ordinary people can combine and succeed in achieving socially desirable goals if they are encouraged and helped to organize themselves and manage their affairs without being cajoled or coerced by the aristocracy of status, power, wealth and knowledge. If you are a social scientist, you will value the book under review for its grounded holistic perspective in unfolding the intricacies

of the cooperative phenomenon. If you are among those who manage, promote or use cooperative services, you will find in the book much that could help you to examine and understand what has happened so far around you. If your mind and heart cooperate, you will also get some concrete thoughts on how your proximate cooperative can be moulded to yield results as an integral part of a larger cooperative called India.

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Donald W. Attwood. 1993. *Raising Cane: The Political Economy of Sugar in Western India.* Delhi: Oxford University Press. Pp. xviii + 366 Rs. 250.

In the last decade, scholars and policy makers in the Third World have realized that as an alternative to the market, state intervention through big bureaucracies (of the East European and Soviet variety) has not been worked successfull in promoting development. The alternative to both the market and the state is termed as the 'middle course' by Attwood. This path refers to local initiatives in promoting development. Successfull attempts at establishing sugar cooperatives in the Deccan area of rural Maharashtra provide good instances of such a middle path. Here Attwood studies the political economy of sugar to trace how cooperative enterprises successfully emerged in the Deccan region. He examines the old and well known argument of dependency theory (and its Indian variant), that commercialization of agriculture brought about by contact with capitalism resulted in the impoverishment of peasants who got entangled in vicious debt traps.

Attwood finds that in the Deccan, peasants were not compelled to switch to cash crops (like sugarcane). The policy of intensive irrigation—as against extensive irrigation—was adopted as a pragmatic response to the decisions made by cultivators. Moreover, intensive irrigation decreased the region's vulnerability to famines. Hence the vital question is: What kind of development has taken place in rural Maharashtra? A 'rural middle class' comprising mostly middle castes has now emerged

in contrast to the old elites comprising mostly upper caste-dominated middle classes. This rural class took the initiative to start sugar cooperatives and made use of productive resources efficiently, resulting in the decline of the old elites. Attwood remarks that the emergence of the rural middle class reflects the 'revolution from the middle' which is quite different from the experience of Japan (which had a revolution from above) and of China (characterized by a revolution from below).

The problem with this theory of revolution from the middle is that it is not able to explain why other cooperatives (dominated by the same middle class) could not succeed equally (for instance, cotton) in Maharashtra. Further, while the rural middle castes have consolidated themselves, the lower sections, especially the Dalits, have not been able to derive benefits to the same degree, making one wonder whether there is now a need for a revolution from below! In spite of this flaw the book is a worthy addition to the growing literature on political economy and cooperatives.

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Joseph Cherian and K. V. Eswara Prasad. 1995. *Women, Work and Inequity: The Reality of Gender.* Ghaziabad: National Labour Institute. Pp. xiii+229.

The volume under review contains four studies aimed at getting a 'clear feel and understanding of the expression of gender in typical situations that concern labour'.

The first study by K. Padma is of work, unionization and gender in marine food processing units in and around the city of Vishakhapatnam in which women workers proliferate. The study notes certain well known facts about such industries–that even though marine food processing is a cash rich industry, given its substantial export orientation, women are never hired as permanent workers but as casual and contract labour; their wages are abysmally low; they are given no opportunity for job enhancement; they work in physically harmful and

hazardous conditions which take a heavy toll of their health. The work they do is tedious, monotonous, non-supervisory and repetitive, and despite its high contribution to the value added, is not regarded as skilled work. The study also highlights how women are discouraged from unionizing and are blatantly exploited. There is hostility between local and migrant women preventing unity. The study also notes that notwithstanding shortcomings, unions, when they exist, do make some difference in wages, working conditions and just treatment of women workers. The study, however, lacks in breadth and depth, mainly because of the short time duration in which it was conducted.

The other three studies break new ground and cover work spheres which have not received much attention so far—a study of construction workers union in Tamil Nadu (TMKTS) by T. Kaveri, a study of the operation of an NGO among rural women called Disha, in the village of Sultanpur-Chilkana, Uttar Pradesh by Rina Tagore, and a study of labour administration and labour laws enforcement in the state of Maharashtra by Minakshi Thorat.

The TMKTS study details the labour process in the construction industry with the women being assigned lower paid, lower skilled jobs which are seen as mere extensions of their domestic work and with no chances for upward mobility. The author traces the evolution of the union which became a pro-active and strong one with the full participation of women. She elucidates the priorities that emerged over time in the union and the struggle for legislative action to regulate the industry. However, women within the union are marginalized and are not given leadership roles or encouraged to take active part in decision making. Concerns of women too are sidelined. It is obvious that the unorganized sector with its preference for women poses a tremendous challenge to unions. It is also apparent from the study, that unions have to make a choice, whether to go along with existing social preferences and norms that deprive and deny women of their rights and space in every sense or, to work for a new equitable order in partnership with women. This would require, more than anything else, a reworking of relations between men and women as leaders within the union and between leaders and members. The subject of investigation, that is, the working of a union, though a significant one, does not however receive the full and comprehensive attention that it deserves.

Disha, when it was set up, had adopted the 'welfare approach' perceiving women only as beneficiaries. Later the NGO shifted its priorities to the 'gender and development' approach, wherein women are seen as human resources and as full participants in development. In this phase it seeks to meet the strategic interests of women which are concerned with questions of their access and control over resources and with the acquiring of autonomy to make their own choices in their personal spaces. The decision-makers are also concerned with changing the status of women. However, there is a need to change the basic nature of the relationship between men and women which would go a long way in improving the status of women.

This volume perceives social relationships as an 'expression of power between men and women'. Such a perception, however, cannot make gender relations free of conflict. This conclusion points to the need to change the meaning of 'empowerment of women'. To empower women is to ensure that men and women enjoy equality of status.

The Disha study notes the changes that took place. The community involved with it, particularly the women, gave new direction and meaning to the role of the NGO. The study zooms in on the formation of the *morcha* (a union-type association) and on the struggle of the women for minimum wages in agricultural work which prepared the ground for the anti-liquor movement that swept the district.

The Disha study also attempts to understand the nature of the transformation that took place in the lives of the women who were in the core group and the role of the secretary of the organization, a man, in supporting and furthering the transformation. Also highlighted is the non-involvement of men in the partnering process which has been recently attempted.

The paper on labour administration system in Maharashtra is another insightful study in this volume. It highlights the biased recruitment process, limited opportunities for career advancement for women, the odds they face as women because of the demands of home-making and other disincentives. The study then views the labour laws enforcement process, which is a major function of labour administration. Data is presented on the enforcement of the Equal Remuneration Act in the Bombay region and on the subtle gender bias that creeps into the process.

The book then takes the reader to the Santa Cruz Electronic Export Processing Zone (SEEPZ), a high-tech industrial area, with excellent infrastructural facilities for units producing electronic items. Women constitute the bulk of the workforce but their wages are kept low and work conditions leave much to be desired. This study highlights the low priority given by labour administration on the enforcement of basic labour legislation in SEEPZ. Attempts at unionization are invidiously derailed by the employers. The author concludes by questioning whether the labour administration, given its patriarchal orientation, can ever be effective in ensuring gender justice.

All in all, this book makes for absorbing reading. It focuses on some hitherto unexplored aspects of the work situation. One only wishes more time had been assigned to the project investigations so that the authors could have come up with more detailed data and penetrating documentation.

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M. N. Srinivas (ed.) 1995. *Caste: Its Twentieth Century Avatar.* New Delhi: Viking/Penguin. Pp. 306. Rs. 300.

'Sambhavami yuge yuge' seems to be the essence of the message conveyed by this 20th century avatar of caste. Unlike the famous declaration of the Vishnu-avatar in the *Srimad Bhagvada*, however, this pledge to reappear in every epoch—to never disappear—provokes profound unease rather than hope. M. N. Srinivas, the editor of the volume under review, describes caste as an 'enduring, baffling, complex, controversial, and fascinating institution' (p. vii). This collection amply demonstrates the aptness of these adjectives, but is more successful at marshalling evidence on the persistence of caste than in helping us out of our bafflement. However, this is less a reflection on the volume than a pointer to the curious predicament of Indian sociology. A discipline founded on modernist expectations and endowed with a Western-modern conceptual apparatus, Indian sociology has found it difficult to initiate

the retooling necessary to deal with so stubbornly distinctive an institution as caste.

The editor's introduction (essentially an overview of the issues discussed by the various contributors) is followed by thirteen essay which can be roughly divided into four broad sections. The first and largest (about a third of the volume) is a 'panoramic' section with broad surveys of caste in relation to: women (Leela Dube); political economy (M. N. Panini); Hinduism (N. Jayaram); and rural India (G. K. Karanth). The second is a section on region-specific movements–the backward class movement in Tamil Nadu (P. Radhakrishnan); backward castes and social change in UP and Bihar (Meenakshi Jain); and Buddhism and questions of identity among Mahars in rural Maharashtra (Neera Burra). The third section centres on a critique of the Mandal Commission Report and the reasoning behind it (two chapters by A. M. Shah and one each by P. Radhakrishnan and B. Sivaramayya). The last section deals with caste among non-Hindus, featuring Zarina Bhatty on Muslims and Joseph Tharamangalam on Christians.

Given the space constraints relative to the size and breadth of the volume, this short review will concentrate on two important sections (comprising eight of the thirteen essays) which also illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of the book.

Despite the inevitable unevenness, the 'panoramic' section is clearly the strongest one in the volume. In demonstrating how 'the principles of caste inform the specific nature of sexual asymmetry in Hindu society' and how 'the boundaries and hierarchies of caste are articulated by gender' (p. 21), Leela Dube brings to light the role played by women in the maintenance of caste occupations, food interdictions and endogamy. Even more, perhaps, than gender, the political economy of caste is urgently in need of detailed investigation, and M. N. Panini's essay on this theme seeks to disclose the existence of an elective affinity between socialist planning and casteism while suggesting that the market economy may help undermine it. Such optimism may be misplaced, considering that race, ethnicity and other ascriptive markers continue to thrive within decidedly 'unsocialist' market economies such as the USA.

Wishing to examine the changing 'protean relationship' between caste and Hinduism in the context of the Mandal and Masjid issues (p. 69), N. Jayaram's essay offers a fleeting insight into the increased

religiosity amongst the Shudras today, but ends with the cryptic prognosis that 'Hinduism will benefit more from the survival of caste than caste from Hinduism' (p. 84). G. K. Karanth argues that many of the central tenets of caste are changing in contemporary rural India, but that the concept of dominant caste continues to be valid and useful. However, in evaluating the apparent breakdown of the caste-occupation link, due weightage must be given to the amazingly strong correlation that persists at both extremes of the status hierarchy–the vast majority of the highest status job-holders are from 'high' castes, while almost all the lowest status job-holders belong to 'low' castes.

This central fact is constantly minimised by the weakest part of the volume, that devoted to a critique of the Mandal Commission. (Unfortunately, the cover–showing scenes from the Mandal agitation–will direct more attention towards it.) An overly narrow focus on the evils and errors perpetrated by the commission pre-empts a more helpful, broader critical effort to contextualize the report by analysing the persistent social problem that it tried to tackle, and the alternative means available for doing this. Despite the careful but pre-positioned arguments of A. M. Shah, this section as a whole fails to promote an understanding of the issues involved. P. Radhakrishnan's 'sociological critique' of the commission's methodology depends too much on the reader's sympathy. For example, the commission's mode of estimating the OBC (Other Backward Classes) population (p. 207, also quoted in the 'Introduction', p. xxvii) is treated as self-evidently absurd, implying that better alternatives were available but were overlooked. Explicit detailing of such alternatives would have been fairer, more convincing and above all more useful. Similarly, the criteria for social backwardness (p. 209-10) seem reasonable enough given the database available, and as likely as any to minimise the probability of Type I errors.

Overall, while renewed attention to gender and political economy are welcome, one wishes the volume had shown more evidence of self-reflexivity. Thus, while the opening sentence of the 'Introduction' rightly notes that 'there has been a great deal of writing on caste . . . but the writers have invariably been men', it leaves unsaid the fact that these men were almost never from the 'lower' castes. To upgrade our conceptual armory and recalibrate our sensibilities, we must study not only caste but also the way in which it has been studied. This might open

up to scrutiny such factors as the relative paucity of critical studies on caste in urban, middle class and 'upper' caste contexts, precisely the locations where it is rendered socially invisible.

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Murray Milner, Jr. 1994. *Status and Sacredness: A General Theory of Status Relation and an Analysis of Indian Culture.* New York: Oxford University Press. Pp. 336. Rs. 250

When Westerners think of the intangible and the ethereal, they more often than not turn to India. The study of this non-material resource is of interest to Murray Milner because India, where status and moral worth are not directly dependent on economic or political power, offers lessons for other societies. More significantly, for Milner the study of non-material resources helps demarcate status and opens up a new approach to the understanding of Hindu India.

The novelty of the approach, termed by Milner as 'resource structuralism' (different from that of Levi-Strauss and Bourdieu), lies in its articulation of symbolic capital in generating varying levels of social status. By accentuating the symbolic resource in a structure that does not always convert it into material power, Milner counters Bourdieu's reductionism and more fundamentally Marxist materialism.

The author's attempt to build an overarching framework to understand Hindu caste and religion, centres on Brahmanical concepts and notions. This is because the uniqueness of India is exemplified by the Brahman who has been able to relatively insulate religious status from other forms of power by delegating political and economic power to other castes. The Brahmans (he calls them as 'qualified renouncers') form the elite in society and the author goes on to show how their values have become the primary basis of status. Milner seems to deliberately avoid any reference to sanskritization, perhaps to emphasize the break with earlier analyses in putting across this point of view. The same argument holds for his own society: 'Capitalists are supposed to pursue their own economic interest; the well-being of the society is supposed to

be left to politicians and the invisible hand of the market. Under such conditions wealth tends to become the primary basis of status' (p. 70). The author provides other illuminative parallels with institutions in Western society throughout his discussion.

The key elements in the ranking of status are its scarcity (inexpansibility) and its inconvertibility by wealth or force (inalienability). Following Max Weber, for Milner the source of status can be traced to 'conformity' to social norms.

Milner develops another much neglected theme, that of 'association'. He stresses the need to understand 'the legitimacy of the political elite through their association with actors, institutions and symbols that have high status and legitimacy among those who are ruled' (p. 95). The same is true of the association of humans with the deities. The renouncer and the Brahman get the highest status by their closest relation to God–an extremely useful idea well developed in the book.

The author, in showing how status groups tend to elaborate and ritualize their norms in order to make it more difficult for outsiders to conform, uses concepts similar to Bourdieu's which he earlier criticizes. 'Unconscious ways' (p. 106) is Bourdieu's 'habitus', the 'excluding of outsiders' is related to Bourdieu's way of creating a 'field' and the 'taken for granted' is Bourdieu's 'doxa'. Though the author recognizes some of the similarities, it is not clear to what advantage he renounces Bourdieu's concepts.

In the process of delineating the key features of Indian society, Milner argues that the relative importance and legitimacy attributed to different types of resources and power helps find the connection between key social categories and the types of sanctions and patterns of resources that are characteristic of a society. These features would be familiar to any student of India. The novelty, however, lies in Milner's ability to show how categories such as Hinduism, caste, the jajmani system, marriage, Untouchables, bandits, ascetics and sects are interrelated and linked to the status order.

To explain the categories of religion, Milner uses key indological texts like the Rigveda and the *Bhagvad Gita*. It is certainly advantageous to use the concepts in these texts. The *Gita* is read by numerous sects in Hinduism. But the shortcoming in this approach lies in its being ahistorical. The author recognizes this weakness (p. 228), but justifies its

necessity by referring to the lack of adequate data. It is, however, important to appreciate that the *Gita* lends itself to a variety of interpretations in different sectarian philosophies. Hence it is not convincing to state that one particular teaching of the *Gita* orders status in general. Furthermore, although the *Bhagavad Gita* is still valued, the practice of tradition in the context of modernity has undergone significant changes thereby reordering life styles and values.

Milner considers celibacy the most significant value that orders status. This manifests itself in the householder (even the most illiterate one) in his (specifically male) regulation of sexual life. Sexual symbolism is an aspect of power–*shakti* (female energy). This becomes slightly problematic in the light of varieties of sects and sectarian philosophies. Milner clubs Brahamanical sects with Bhakti sects. This would mean that the Sri Vaishnava and the Madhva sect are put in the same category as the Kabir Panthis, Pushti Margis and the Aghori sect (the latter four are not mentioned by Milner). These sects have varying understanding of the householder and celibacy, *bhakti* and *shakti*, which could alter the analysis of power that Milner extends to kingship.

In spite of the shortcomings mentioned above, Milner has been on the whole successful in producing an essential reading in South Asian Studies, social stratification, religion and general social theory.

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Prem Chowdhry. 1994. *The Veiled Women: Shifting Gender Equation in Rural Haryana 1818-1990* Delhi: Oxford University Press. Pp. xix + 461. Rs. 475.

With this book, Prem Chowdhry has emerged as a leading feminist historian of modern India. The book takes us from 1880 to 1990, providing a fascinating account of the position of women in rural Haryana in the colonial and post-colonial periods. It deals with the effects of the interaction of patriarchy, class and state on gender and its shifting equations. Drawing on oral history, folk tales, folk songs, myths, proverbs, popular sayings and nonsense rhymes, interviews, observation,

official records, as well as archival material, the author reveals that despite rapid social, economic and political change, women continue to occupy a subordinated and subjugated position as symbolized by the phenomenon of *ghunghat* (veil).

In the colonial period the backward and underdeveloped political economy of Haryana gave rise to an ambivalent culture which threw up customs such as bride price, widow remarriage and polyandry. The writer argues that a 'liberal sexual climate', made possible by these practices has, on the one hand, strengthened patriarchy, and on the other, fulfilled the requirements of rural economy.

A subsistence level rural economy in the colonial period with total dependence on intensive family labour made women economic assets. Peasant culture allowed the full economic participation of women in agriculture. Women performed work somewhat similar to that of men. But they did not have a high social status or a sound economic standing. This ambivalence was widespread and clearly visible in many spheres.

The importance of women in agriculture led to the acknowledgement of practices such as the sale and purchase of brides, widow remarriage and polyandry as 'economic necessity'. The work qualities of a prospective bride were scrutinized at the time of negotiation of marriage. Generally the girl's age and height were disregarded with the result that the bride used to be older and sometimes taller than the groom.

The agrarian requirements which allowed bride price also institutionalized widow remarriage known as *karewa*, *karao* and *chaddar andazi*. A widow's right to remarry was totally controlled by her late husband's family. If a widow married a person belonging to another family or a stranger, a caste panchayat, would compel the groom to break the marriage or pay a price to the former husband's family, to underline its ownership.

Apart from the need for the manual labour of the widow, the popularity of widow remarriage within the family was generated out of the need to retain landed property. If the widow had children, only her sons succeeded to the property. After remarriage, the widow had no right to the property of her former husband. Though a number of widows resisted remarriage, the prevailing system did not allow such resistance to surface. No ritual was required to prove that the remarriage had taken place; cohabitation was enough.

Polyandry was another source of labour in the family. Invariably a male resorted to a second marriage when his wife remained childless for a few years or did not bear a son. A wife who could not bear a male child was considered barren because there would then be no daughter-in-law to work in the fields.

In the post-colonial period, the new climate of independence has not altered the position of women in rural Haryana. In addition, during this period, the proletarianization of women belonging to poor peasant families, marginalization of female agricultural workers and complete male control over decision-making processes has reinforced the subordination and subjugation of women. New agricultural technologies have resulted in the cultural devaluation of women's work.

Due to structural conditioning of gender, women have developed inferiority complexes and become a willing party to their own marginalization and exploitation. This 'self-imposed subalternism of women was structured within their class and caste'. Its acceptance afforded them privileges which they enjoyed as part of their class and caste *vis-a-vis* other classes and castes. This apart, the intensification of casteism in the post-colonial period played a crucial role in generating conflicts among women, thereby creating conditions of 'self-imposed subalternism'. Women internalized it as a substitute for inheritance.

The author, in developing her thesis, makes two contentious observations. First, she notes that the popular culture in the region is 'closely associated with specific/dominant caste and dominant class and yet is widely dispersed among different social groups . . . thus erasing divisions and dissimilarities between the cultural formulations of different social groups'. Such an observation is not sustainable both theoretically and empirically. It is erroneous to hold that castes and classes, apart from the dominant ones, do not have their own ideologies, perceptions, styles of life, rituals, and customs. The fact that Chowdhry did not stay for long in any of the villages in the region prevented her from gaining deeper insights into rural life.

Second, Chowdhry observes that ideology, customs and cultural practices attached to the patriarchal order are shaped and reshaped continuously by the requirements of the economic structure. In my view this represents a simplistic and reductionist approach. By citing the evidence of oral traditions provided in the book one can easily come to

the obverse conclusion that the requirements of economic structures are shaped and reshaped by patriarchal ideology, customs and practices.

Despite the criticism made above, I consider the book as a valuable contribution to the history of modern India. It is also valuable for sociologists and others who are interested in understanding the position of women in Indian history.

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Roger Jeffery and Alaka M. Basu (eds). 1996. *Girls' Schooling, Women's Autonomy and Fertility Change in South Asia.* New Delhi/ Thousand Oaks/London: Sage. Pp. 339. Rs. 225.

The issues of female schooling, women's autonomy and fertility change are complicated in the specific context of South Asia, where the hold of custom and tradition is still strong and where the traditional family and kinship structures have greatly limited the autonomy of women. None the less, the varied religio-cultural background of the region makes the discussion interesting and complex. However, in comparison to other parts of the world, the South Asian region presents a unique socio-cultural zone.

The book is mainly an outcome of a workshop held in New Delhi in April 1993, to examine the possible relationships between three different, but inter-related, themes, namely, schooling, autonomy and fertility—all concerning women in South Asia. The editors of the volume provide the setting for the theme in their analytical introduction. The premise of their argument is that those women having a good schooling are likely to go in for fewer number of children. They, however, realize that primary schooling alone is not adequate. They point out that such a dramatic effect on fertility is brought about by secondary schooling.

Besides the introductory chapter, the book includes eleven papers by well known sociologists, social-demographers and experts on gender studies. Alaka Basu develops an interesting but problematic typology of schooling in South Asia. First is religious schooling, in the institutions run by religious leaders of the community. Second is schooling in

private schools as distinct from schooling in state run schools. Basu contends that a girl frequenting a state run school is likely to be poorer than her privately educated counterpart and infers that the former belongs to a more conservative family. Basu is perhaps referring to private 'public' as opposed to government run schools in metropoligan cities, which is misleading. Some private schools are as bad, if not worse, than state run schools. Also, it is not clear how Basu equates programmes of adult literacy with schooling.

John Cleland and Shireen Jejeebhoy review the findings of censuses and large-scale demographic surveys to throw up valuable insights about the possible pathways of influence between schooling and fertility. Karuna Chanana provides a case study of the impact of social, economic, political and cultural macro-changes on women's lives within the context of the family. She explores three dimensions of autonomy, namely, husband-wife communication; mother's role in influencing decisions regarding children's education; and the twin issues of daughter's right to property and dowry demands. This paper testifies to the importance and usefulness of qualitative data and the case study method.

Zeba A. Sathar explores the extent to which schooling can be a measure of the relative status of women and of the influence of women's social position on fertility in Pakistan. Sathar confirms that in the urban areas female schooling has brought down fertility levels. In rural areas, however, there are fewer educational opportunities.

In their analysis of girls' schooling, women's autonomy and fertility outcomes in Bijnor district in Uttar Pradesh, Patricia Jeffery and Roger Jeffery reveal that women have little freedom and are structurally powerless. They have no independent earning power nor do they own any property. Again, it was found that schooling does not provide a counter to increase a woman's ability or inclination to act or think rebelliously, either explicitly or implicitly.

Sajeda Amin, in her paper, argues that understanding the factors that determine the timing and nature of a woman's marriage arrangement is central to understanding the impact of female education on fertility. Further, she explores the connections between women's status and fertility, drawing upon evidence from a long-term, intensive village study on family structure and change in two villages in north-west

Bangladesh. John Cleland, Nashid Kamal and Andrew Sloggett explore the links between fertility regulation, schooling and autonomy of women in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, it appears that exposure to formal schooling enhances the position of women and accords them greater independence of movement and a greater role in domestic decisions. But the effect of women's schooling and autonomy in the use of contraception does not necessarily affect fertility rates.

The main argument of Carol Vlassoff's paper is that the association between female schooling, autonomy and fertility, in rural Maharashtra in India is not as straightforward as is often suggested. According to her, educational advancement and fertility decline may be simultaneous, but they are relatively independent processes. She finds that female autonomy plays a marginal, though somewhat equivocal, role. Leela Visaria describes the regional variations in female autonomy and fertility and contraception in India. Analysis of two districts—one each from Gujarat and Kerala—suggests that the association between fertility and any of the autonomy indices is not clearly established. On the other hand, in all the districts, a linear relationship is evident between contraceptive use and autonomy indices. Interestingly, it was found that a significantly higher proportion of women who enjoy a higher level of income or personal autonomy use contraception rather than women with no or low autonomy. The paper clearly brings out the merits of Kerala Model over that of Gujarat.

Presenting the evidence from a survey carried out in three districts of Kerala in 1991, Irudaya Rajan, Mala Ramanathan and U. S. Mishra demolish some of the myths about Kerala society. For instance, Kerala women cannot be said to enjoy a high level of autonomy because, though one-fourth of them hold property and/or an independent source of income, only a small proportion of them retain it under their personal control. Further, even with regard to the purchase of personal goods, about two-thirds of the women felt that they needed either their husband's or their in-law's permission. What makes it more interesting is that women were capable of deciding on their own only in matters pertaining to child health, and even in this case, the authors say, it is probably because of that the urgency of the situation.

The book ends with Bruce Caldwell's exploration of the linkages between female schooling, autonomy and fertility in Sri Lanka. Sri

Lanka presents a unique context in South Asia. It has very high levels of female schooling, comparatively low levels of fertility and mortality. Caldwell finds that schooling has been associated with major changes in society which have affected the position of women. These changes, however, are not in themselves adequate to explain the dramatic fall in fertility. It would be perhaps more accurate to say that high level of female autonomy is conducive to fertility decline. On the whole, this book can be regarded as a significant contribution to the hitherto unexplored interface between demography and education.

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Romy Borooah, Kathleen Cloud, Subadra Seshadri, T. S. Saraswathi, Jean. T. Peterson, Amita Verma (eds). 1994. *Capturing Complexity: An Interdisciplinary Look at Women, Households and Development.* New Delhi: Sage Publications. Pp. 282. Rs. 295.

The contributors to this volume, who are drawn from different disciplines, identify households as critical for capturing the complexity of women's lives. They argue that the household is the basic unit of production, consumption and decision making, besides being the locus of power relations that affect women's lives in most societies. There are gender differences in the intra-household allocation of production and consumption affecting the quality of family life, of nutrition and children's health, education and employment. This is often missed by those who see households as unities, organized along lines of reciprocity and sharing. There is a wealth of evidence indicating that households are structured by inequality, conflict and violence. Hence the importance of grasping the attributes of households, their variations in form, internal dynamics and strategies for understanding women's participation in development programmes and for shaping policies directed at women. According to the contributors, such a focus can provide a comprehensive image of the household in its relationship to wider institutional structures and contexts. The contributors go on to identify the policy implications of not addressing contextual factors of women's behaviour. They

examine issues like employment, fertility behaviour, nutrition and health in their relation to women and their households. They bring out the poverty of several concepts that fail to expose the extent and variety of women's activities. Detailed micro-level studies are utilized by them to develop categories and indicators which are applicable at the macro-level without obscuring the reality of people's lives. The volume questions the relation between activities that women engage in and the analytical categories that are used to describe them, such as 'household production', 'employment', 'labour-force participation', and so on. One insightful observation is that terms such as production and consumption, as these are used in conventional economics, are inadequate when applied to the activities of women. Sharon Y. Nickols and Kamala Srinivasan emphasize that the concept of production needs to be broadened to include unremunerated activities that provide goods and services to the household. Such services, usually rendered by women, contribute significantly to the well-being of the household and the nation.

The papers focusing on delivery systems for women argue for a clear understanding of women as economic actors in the context of the household. Information on women's activities, their ownership of assets, their access to resources, income, and information are regarded as critical in designing the delivery of credit and other services to women. Other papers address the relationship between women's income-earning activities, their household roles and responsibilities and child-care patterns. They illustrate that the location of the activity (at home or away from home), the nature of the activity (whether the child can accompany the mother), other social and household factors (such as the existence of alternative caretakers and the degree to which they bear responsibility for the child), naturally interact in diverse ways to create a variety of patterns of child care.

The papers examining factors affecting nutritional status and behaviour criticize the research and policy directions that focus only on the biomedical aspects, and argue that it is essential to go beyond mere documentation of the extent of malnutrition and instead try to locate the causes of malnutrition. This means giving attention to the role of women as economic actors, care-givers for their families, as active agents and beneficiaries in the production and consumption of goods and services.

The book succeeds in highlighting the importance of the household as the preferred unit of analysis. The focus on the household can also indirectly lelgitimize patriarchal traditions which confine women to the domestic sphere and divert attention from the macro issues and gender bias prevalent in the non-domestic spheres of social life. Nevertheless, the book makes a forceful case for an interdisciplinary approach to the study of social and economic conditions that govern and constrain women's lives.

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S. N. Eisenstadt. 1992. *Jewish Civilization: The Jewish Historical Experience in a Comparative Perspective.* SUNY Series in Israeli Studies (edited by Russell Stone). New York: State University of New York Press. Pp. 313.

For an Indian to review a book on Jewish civilization is not a mere academic activity but a deepening participation in the remembrance of a great primordial tradition. The theoretical ground for this book is prepared across the boundaries of theology, history, sociology and anthropology. It is also an example of outstanding ethnography and a significant contribution to historical methods.

Introducing the book, Eisenstadt contends that 'the best way to look at the Jewish historical experience is to analyze it as the history of a civilization and not only as a history of a people, religious, ethnic or national group' (p. 2). The term *civilization* is used here with special emphasis on its difference from religion. *Religion* is defined 'as a set of beliefs, especially about various transmundane matters, patterns of worship, of ritual observance and the like. *Civilization*, in the sense used here, entails the attempts to construct or reconstruct social life according to an ontological vision that combines conceptions of the nature of the cosmos, of transmundane reality, with the regulation of the major arenas of social life and interaction of the political arena, authority, the economy, family life, and the like' (p. 1). On the relations between religion and civilization, there is another way of understanding. One has

to consider whether the difference is anthropologically true or not. As the author claims, many religions have been only a part of a component and that too not necessarily the most central component of civilizations. Jewish civilization, as we know, has been the womb of one of the greatest religions of the world. Can one say that religion is not necessarily the most central component of Jewish civilization? The author does not provide an answer which relates to the ontological condition for the emergence of an ancient civilization. To grasp the relationship between historical experience and religious experience, affirmation of what reality is at the experiential level is imperative. Undoubtedly, historicity is the core characteristic of Semitic-Christian civilization. The Bible ascribes creation to a single God and establishes between this God and the world He creates a historical, *not* mythical, relationship. Hence the importance that is given to historical experience. But this is not true for other peoples and civilizations such as China and India. The Chinese grammarians make no formal codification of temporal dimensions–past, present, future–in a system of verbal tenses. In the Indian tradition the ultimate meaning of life is ahistorical or trans-historical and hence there is no absolute concept of history. A distinction is sometimes drawn between measurement of time and the way it is experienced. Historical experience does not inevitably give rise to a civilization. The basic component of Indian civilization is the 'spiritual experience'. Hence, what is true for the anthropocentric Jewish civilization is not true for the cosmocentric Indian civilization, and what is true for both these civilizations is not true for the modern technocentric civilization. More than one civilization would say that religion is a human invariant. Therefore, religious experience, with or without reference to God, is the foundation of all civilizations. Eisenstadt, however, presents a powerful view of Jewish history and civilization in terms of mundane reality.

The first part of this book examines the Jewish history and the distinctive characteristics of Jewish civilization. It has been shown that throughout the formative period and the medieval period the Jews have behaved as the bearers of a civilization. Jewish religious orientations and practices have been compared with the Hellenistic and Roman civilizations of antiquity as well as with the monotheistic Christian and Islamic civilizations. The second and the largest part of the book (pp.

85-248)–related to the modern period–is devoted to an analysis of different patterns of incorporation of Jewish communities in their host societies in Europe and America in the 19th and the first four decades of the 20th century. An attempt has been made to analyse the national movements that developed among the Jews towards the end of the 19th century, especially the Zionist movement. Some of the salient characteristics of Israeli society–the outcome of the ideological orientation of the Zionist movement–have been highlighted with admirable clarity.

The authors in these explorations has addressed himself first to the question of the unique characteristics of the Jewish experience as compared to the experience of the religious or national communities, minorities, national movements and other ideological-revolutionary or settlers' societies. His concern has been to relate the uniqueness of the Jewish responses to specific civilizational and historical features of the Jews. Looking into the future, the author holds that 'the Jewish encounter with modernity and with so-called post-modern times entails possibilities for the worse' (p. 282). 'The hostile relations between Israel and most of its neighbouring states seemingly are of a different, new nature; mostly between national states and movements. But these encounters, as well as the multiple reactions to the Israeli-Arab conflict throughout the Western and Muslim world, still bear many of the seeds of the historical ambivalent hostile relations between the Jewish people, their civilization, and their host civilizations' (p. 285).

Today, when the world has turned into a battle ground, when god and evil are pitted against each other, when the forces of light battle the forces of darkness, nobody can really predict about the fate of any civilization. But in the midst of all these Eisenstadt has been able to demonstrate the continuous creativity of the Jews as a 'people' and as a civilization.

This book is by a sociologist. But anthropologists and historians as well would enjoy the clear view of Jewish civilization provided in the book. It is also an invaluable source for understanding the civilizational and religious roots of the present day Israeli-Arab conflict.

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Terry Arendell. 1995. *Fathers and Divorce.* Thousand Oaks: Sage. Pp. xii + 303. $ 49.95.

Here is a book that seeks to understand divorced fathers of the United States–the way they look at their fractured identities, relate to their former wives and participate in their parental responsibilities. This interpretative understanding is important for two reasons: first, divorce is about separation, an experience of loss, a crisis of identity. Hence any sociological study of the dynamics of interpersonal relationships is bound to be interested in divorce. Second, a critical look at divorce–particularly divorced fathers–is likely to help us to see the construction of gender identity, how, for example, men perceive femininity, motherhood and parenting.

In the early 1990s Terry Arendell interviewed 75 divorced fathers living in various parts of New York state. And the result is this volume which is divided into four parts and ten chapters. Her narrative is simple and lucid and her objective is clear and well defined. She wants to examine how these divorced men 'viewed and managed their situations and relationships, particularly the former spousal and parental ones, and handled their emotional lives and identities'.

Her findings do not surprise the reader. She demonstrates that divorced men, because of their deeply internalized patriarchal ethos, remain violent and hostile to their former wives and escape their parental responsibilities. This is the mainstream story. Arendell finds that 66 of her respondents confirm the 'masculinist discourse of divorce'. They could not forget that '*being a man* was a master identity, a master status'. Indeed, this armour of masculinity 'overshadowed and dictated their responses to the divorce situation'. For example, 35 'traditionalist' fathers were terribly hostile to their former wives. It was like a 'war without end'. A typical traditionalist father responded: 'It's a war, divorce war, and it's been stimulating, kept me going. ' Because of this 'consistently antagonistic and confrontational' attitude, they often blamed their former wives for all that happened and used derogatory remarks in referring to them. They even justified their violence with comments such as: 'She pushes my buttons and I go ballistic'. What was shocking was that these fathers were not even bothered about taking care of their children. The story of these alienated souls is their 'estrangement

from parenting and their children.' Although 31 'neo-traditionalist fathers' told almost the same story, they, however, considered their parental relationships and children's well-being rather than their determination to oppose the former wife as more important.

Exceptions do exist; there are 9 'innovative and nurturing fathers' among the respondents. Broadly speaking, they are soft, sensitive, communicative and child-centered. To 'protect their offspring and enhance their development' they even collaborated with their former spouses. For them, 'cooperation rather than resistance was the ultimate goal'. An innovative father, unlike the traditionalist one, responded: 'My relationship with my ex-wife is fine, we are friends, good friends'. But their deeply intense parental engagement (this means cultivating the 'feminine' qualities of love and caring) was not easily appreciated in a society in which men are supposed to be 'victorious, or at least, ever-persistent warriors, not compromising care-givers'. Indeed, in such a male dominated culture these nurturing fathers were often reminded of their deviance, they were treated as 'cultural centrics'.

Although not very profound, the book tells a story that ought to be listened to. Despite its empirical nature, it has not fallen into the trap of excessive mathematicization and is readable. To read this book is to realize once again the darkness of a gigantic modern civilization—technological miracles and economic prosperity notwithstanding, it is decaying. Decadence begins with violence and mistrust.

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Thomas R. Trautman. 1995. *Dravidian Kinship*. New Delhi: Vistaar Publications. Pp. xxviii + 469.

The publication of this book in India fifteen years after it made its appearance in the USA (Cambridge University Press, 1981) speaks of the position it occupies in Indian scholarship. Steeped in the tradition of Lewis Henry Morgan and Iravati Karve, the volume is an admirable outcome of Trautman's meticulous research and analysis of a gigantic body of data. Trautman's study covers a large tract of land extending

from the Himalayas in the north to Sri Lanka in the south. The time span of the study stretches from the ancient period to the present day. The title of the book, however, understates the geographical breadth and historical depth of the scholarly exercise. This apparent disjuncture between the title and contents of the book is due to the rigorous procedures adopted in identifying 'Dravidian Kinship'. Trautman rejects the earlier conception of Dravidian Kinship as a morphological type–denoted by formal properties which can embrace distant localized systems. He spares no efforts in refining his procedure so as to remove exogenous features from the ethnographic record. He turns to historical linguistics and adopts a model of analysis that gives equal attention to the non-Dradivian, because as he rightly states, 'the refinement of knowledge concerning Dravidian is contingent on the refinement of our knowledge concerning Indo-Aryan and other non-Dravidian systems and vice versa' (p. 18). The net result is an immensely rich ethnographic account of not only the Dravidian but also the Indo-Aryan kinship systems and their variants. The book also analyses a variety of constructs–the genetic, the synthesizing and the functional constructs of political systems–generated to capture the complex and diverse world of Dravidian kinship.

Trautman's analysis proceeds by familiarizing the readers with the fascinating but abstract world of kinship terminology in two chapters. Meant basically for the specialists the first chapter is highly technical, demanding a high level of concentration. However, this is compensated by a comprehensive review of literature which helps the novice to get acquainted with diverse perspectives.

The second chapter is no less formidable in its use of technical terms and symbols. However, treading on firmer ethnographic ground, it provides an interesting insight into the relation between the structure of terminology and marriage rules. Using the type cases of Tamil and Hindi, it includes a semantic comparison between the Dravidian and Indo-Aryan systems. At the terminological level though, Trautman finds little resemblance between the two. The rule of cross cousin marriage, integral to the Dravidian system, implies a number of equations between genealogical kin types, such as MB=FZH=SPF. This is in contrast to the Indo-Aryan system where adherence to the principle of exogamy results in a sharp distinction between kin and affines.

If convergence is elusive in the structure of the terminology, Trautman does not take long to discover that the unity of Indian kinship lies in its culture. He illustrates this by turning to the Dharmashastra and points to the universal principle of the *kanyadan* complex (the unrequited gift of the virgin) salient to the *sastric* doctrine of marriage, Although this ideology appears more prominently in the Indo-Aryan form of marriage with its strong hypergamous orientation, it is no stranger to the Dravidian region. Rooted in the Hindu concept of marriage as a means of salvation (which confers merit on the giver and honour and deference on the taker) the ideology of *kanyadan* results in the institutionalization of inequality between wife-givers and wife-takers. It is the pervasiveness of this ideology, Trautman holds, that has worked to tilt the isogamous ideals inherent in the bilateral rule of sibling exchange (a basic form of cross cousin marriage) in the direction of unilaterality.

Trautman's position goes beyond Dumont who viewed the unity of Indian kinship as arising from the importance attached to 'marriage alliance' in both the Dravidian and Indo-Aryan systems. While Trautman does not openly disagree with Dumont in this regard, he insists that the pan-Indian character of kinship lies in its ideological underpinning—the *kanyadan* complex. Significantly, he notes that the '. . . Dharmashastra theory of marriage is not an alliance theory because it is not a sociology, but a soteriology. Alliance is that very expectation of return that negates the transcendent character of a gift. The Dharmashastra eliminates alliance from its ideal of marriage by treating it as an incident to marriage, whose essence is gift, by a redefinition of the transaction in terms of gift, and by supression'(p. 293). This proposition is vital not only for shedding new light on the subject, but also for the warning of danger it signals in the rigid and mechanical application of so called universal theories. In this context, Trautman's critique of Mauss's principle of 'reciprocity' which is salient to Levi-Strauss's theory of marriage, is highly instructive.

In pursuance of his search for the supra-regional quality of Indian kinship, Trautman turns in the third chapter to secular Sanskrit, Prakrit and Pali literature to trace the incidence of cross cousin marriage in the Indo-Aryan region. He examines the politics of kinship to show how different kinship structures bend under its weight; just like the

individual, the political system too uses kinship relations opportunistically to serve its own ends. This political use of kinship accounts for variations between marriage rules and their statistical representation on the ground.

A significant addition to the Indian edition is new preface which gives the author an opportunity to review the literature on the subject published after the first publication of the book. It also gives him an opportunity to clarify and reaffirm his theoretical position. Of the various issues that Trautman has touched here, his reference to the Mandari kinship system as the third jigsaw puzzle of the Indian civilization, along with the Indo-Aryan and the Dravidian systems, is significant.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the book is one of the most comprehensive accounts of the kinship system in the South Asian region. Although the use of ancient texts and artifacts as source material may not augur well with anthropologists the authors insights argue powerfully for an inter-disciplinary approach. The book is a must for the post graduate curriculum of Indian universities and an essential item in all libraries.

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T. K. Oommen. 1995. *Alien Concepts and South Asian Reality: Responses and Reformulations*. New Delhi: Sage. Pp. 253. Rs. 295.

The book, divided into two parts and a dozen chapters, is an anthology of articles published between 1967 and 1994 by the author in various national and international journals. While five of the chapters in Part I are 'responses' to the Western theoretical formulations, the remaining seven chapters in Part II are 'reformulations' of the Western conceptual kit. The two parts of the book also display two phases of the academic biography of the author. While the former may be taken as the response of a 'young' Indian scholar, the latter displays the author's efforts to grasp contemporary global issues as a concerned member of

the international community of social scientists. The book demonstrates that Indian sociology and Indian sociologists are inseparably linked to the global sociological enterprise.

The themes examined by the author such as urbanization, social structure and charisma, community power structure, voluntary associations, student power, state, nation and ethnie are of universal significance. These academic concerns and related concepts which are largely borrowed from the West prove inadequate in accounting for the reality experienced in the Third World. Most of the chapters in the book dealing with issues of agrarian classes, social movements, religion and Hindu society, and Indian polity, have been familiar to the Indian readers. The last two chapters dealing with 'Western Vision and Eastern Survival' and 'State, Nation and Ethnie' are of much interest to the reviewer. The first begins by identifying a few priorities for the survival of humankind in the 21st century. It ends with a brief but thought-provoking presentation on the predicament of the Western vision and Eastern survival with the enunciation of three principles regarding the adoption of appropriate technology, attitude towards nature and the interdependence between the state and the market. The last chapter re-examines the currently prevalent concepts of state, nation and ethnie to sort out the confusion created by the conflation of state and nation on the one hand and of the nation and ethnie on the other. These concepts have been redefined to suture the rapture between alien concepts and the South Asian reality.

There has largely been a one way traffic in ideas; Asian academics have often uncritically applied Western ideas and concepts. The author, who represents the best of Asian sociology, has shown how in spite of the national and regional divides, sociology can retain its distinctive comparative international orientation. Some problems, however, remain. As it happens in such collections of articles written over a long span of time there are repetitions of ideas (as on pages 198 and 208). The author, does not take the reader into confidence in demonstrating how his writings are 'South Asian' rather than being merely 'Indian'.

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Wolfe Marshall. 1966. *Elusive Development.* New Delhi: Sage Publications. Pp. 198. Rs. 280.

The book traces the development of socio-economic ideologies and policies at the United Nations ever since it came into being. The author had been associated with the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL) in the 1960s and participated during the early 1970s in a research programme of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), to formulate a 'unified approach to development analysis and planning' as also in 'popular participation in development'.

Reflecting on his tenure in CEPAL the author identifies the shortcomings of the CEPAL strategy which emphasized state action within a capitalist framework to accelerate economic growth and ensure distributive justice. The idea was to focus on capital accumulation and rapid industrialization and gradually incorporate issues of social concern in the agenda of development. The strategy, however, sowed the seeds of discontent. Marxists and men of religion questioned this strategy of development because it failed to deliver goods to the people of Latin America.

The author traces the emergence of a unified approach to development under the influence of Gunnar Myrdal's work, *Asian Drama.* The author holds that Myrdal forced economists to pay attention to the participatory aspects of development. The unified approach to development that was evolved was designed to capture issues of social equality, democracy, health care and education. Over the years, however, frictions developed among participant nations about policies, strategies, methodologies and techniques in the implementation of this unified approach to development. The world body was once again plunged into controversies. Vigorous debates over the definition of development were generated in the various fora of the world body. One outcome has been the recognition that there are plural interpretations and models of 'development' and that notwithstanding such plurality, material development, health care, education, social equality, preservation of traditional values and customs are central to the formulation of an overall policy of development. Marshall Wolfe is of the view that the imbalances in the world economy are due to the fact

that governments and developmental agencies had their own versions of 'development' and lacked the necessary will and foresight to objectively embark upon a course of genuine development and growth. He is of the opinion that a holistic approach which includes environmental concerns and prioritises issues related to poverty in the developing countries is necessary to overcome the difficult conditions of life that afflict the Third World.

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Yunas Samad. 1995. *A Nation in Turmoil: Nationalism and Ethnicity in Pakistan, 1937-1958*. New Delhi: Sage Publications. Pp. 232. Rs. 165.

This book provides a good understanding of the historical determinants of contemporary Pakistani politics. The study, which was undertaken by the author for his doctoral work at Oxford University, has explored the trends in Muslim politics in the context of Islamic nationalism and ethnicity.

The academic tradition in Pakistan has ignored the continuities that obtain between the colonial experience and contemporary political trends. Samad sets out to correct it. He holds that 'there is an element of continuity in the tension between centrifugal and centripetal forces between pre-independence and post-partition Muslim politics'. The framework developed in this context attempts to take up 'both historical and thematical Muslim political responses to efforts at centralization'. By examining the dominant concerns of Muslim politics as was in operation in the United Provinces and the Muslim majority provinces of Bengal, the Punjab, Sarhad (NWFP and Sind), the author effectively shows how Muslim nationalism failed to incorporate the regional identities of these areas. As this trend continued even more vigorously after the creation of Pakistan, the rupture between nationalism and ethnicity widened thereby restricting the growth and consolidation of constitutional democracy. Yunas Samad argues that these circumstances led to the replacement of constitutional democracy with military dictatorship.

Muslims in British India constituted a minority at the national level but formed the majority in several provinces in the western and eastern regions of the country. As such, religious faith alone could not weld demographic, cultural, linguistic and social diversities into a monolithic nationhood. Attempts made to mobilize people exclusively on the basis of Islamic identity proved formidable during the early decades of the 20th century because of the all-encompassing character of the National Congress. The parameters of Muslim politics, however, changed after the 1937 elections, when 'the Muslim League became influential due to the opportunities created by the Raj-Congress conflict and the increasing influence of the Pakistan slogan'.

Initially, the All India Muslim League under Jinnah's leadership failed to bring Muslims under an over-arching unity primarily because the party itself was just 'a loose amalgam of elite and popular forces' and because the regionalist forces within the party were strong. Moreover, pro-Congress groups among Muslims had their own areas of influence both in Muslim-minority and Muslim-majority provinces. But the situation took a dramatic turn once the demand for Pakistan captured the imagination of the Muslim masses and consolidated Muslim unity by the mid-1940s. Although such a unity was never absolute, the League's increasing influence in Muslim-majority provinces coupled with growing communal tension and violence in northern India created a favourable situation for the partition of the subcontinent. Samad argues that the rise of the Muslim League and the emergence of Pakistan was the result of 'the pulls and pressures of subcontinental politics during the last days of the Raj' rather than the outcome of long-term historical trends. Under the circumstances, the new sovereign state of Pakistan was confronted with numerous unsolved problems. While the conflicting issues involved in the very concept of Pakistan confused the leadership, strong provincial forces sought to capture the central power. It was during 1947-53 that the fragile unity established by Muslim nationalism was challenged by the linguistic nationalism of East Pakistan which was compounded by the ill-conceived language policy of the Central government. The controversy over language later developed into Bengali nationalism. The author rightly concludes that the tension between an autocratic centre and regional interests was not only at the root of the emergence of Bangladesh but is also the basic factor responsible for the

Baluchistan rebellion, the uprising in Sind and the recent emergence of Muhajir ethnicity.

The book is theoretically sound and is supported by adequate data. Its originality lies in elucidating the interface between nationalism and ethnicity within the broader structural features of Pakistani society. However, compared to the analysis of pre-independence history, the data-base for the post-1947 period is inadequate. The absence of sufficient information on the socio-economic background of regional elites is another gap, particularly in the later part of the book.

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PROFESSION

New Life Members of the Society

Membership No.	Name and Place
LMI 1636	Jaishree Sunil Bhatt, Sagar
1637	Harendra Mohan Mishra, Bhopal
1638	Konit Srithong, Chandigarh
1639	Ira SAraswat, Bhopal
1640	Aparna Rayaprol, Hyderabad
1641	Seema Sachan, Itarsi
1642	Shailendra Parashar, Ujjain
1643	Rajshri Sastri, Bhopal
1644	Sonia Satsangi, Bilaspur
1645	Tara Sharma, Bilaspur
1646	M. P. Rane, Nasik
1647	N. M. Dewan, Parbhani
1648	Archana Kushwah, Gwalior
1649	Nisha Modi (Jain), Indore
1650	Pradeep Johari, Moradabad
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